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After a few days she began to get acquainted with some of the girls.

(Modern Cinderella) (Page 164)

A MODERN CINDERELLA

BY

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ETC.

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A MODERN CINDERELLA

CHAPTER I

AT THE PALACE

"You may stay down here until nine o'clock if you like," said Bridget. "It's awful cold upstairs. Be sure to wrap yourself good in the old blanket. And put a little coal on the range. If you let my fire go out, I'll skin you alive."

When Marilla first heard that threat she shuddered all over. If you scratched a little bit of skin off it hurt dreadfully. But Bridget never did it. Sometimes she hit her a slap on the shoulder. She couldn't even bear to skin a rabbit. "What do you mean by it?" Marilla gained courage to ask once, when she came to feel at home.

"Oh, I don't know. My mother used to say it. Sometimes she took a strap to us, but she wasn't ever real hard."

Marilla knew about the strap in Bethany Home though she didn't often get it.

"I'll remember about the fire."

"Good night!" Bridget was off.

She always took two or three evenings out in the week and had Sunday afternoon instead of Thursday because they had late dinners during the week. She was very excellent help, so Mrs. Borden let her have her own way.

It was nice and warm in the kitchen; clean, too. Bridget couldn't abide a dirty kitchen. Marilla had wiped the dishes, scoured out the sink and set the chairs straight around. It was a basement kitchen with a dining room above. The front was the furnace cellar, the middle for vegetables and what Bridget called truck.

Marilla sat in the little old rocking chair and put her feet on the oven hearth. It was very nice to rock to and fro and no babies to tend nor Jack to bother with. She sang a few hymns she knew, she said over several, little poems she had learned and spelled a few words. Bridget had turned the gas low, and she couldn't reach it without getting on

a chair or she could have read. So she told herself a story that she had read.

It was very comfortable. She was getting a bit sleepy. Suppose she took a teeny nap as she did sometimes when she was waiting for Bridget. So she shook up the old cushion, brought up the stool, sat on that and laid her head in the chair. And now she wasn't a bit sleepy. She thought of the stove and put on some coal, lest she *might* fall asleep.

She hoped it would be warmer tomorrow when she took out the twins. Then she would venture to stop at the book store window and look at the pictures on the magazine covers. There was a baby that looked so like the twins it made her laugh. She didn't think the twins pretty at all. They had round chubby faces and almost round eyes, and mouths that looked as if they were just ready to whistle, and brown fuzzy hair without a bit of curl in it. But they *were* good, "as good as kittens," their mother said. She did so wish she had a kitten. She had brought such a pretty one from the store one day, a real maltese with black whiskers, but Bridget

said she couldn't have a cat forever round under her feet and made her take it back.

Jack was past five and very pretty, but bad as he could be. Bridget said he was a "holy terror," but she thought holiness was goodness and didn't see the connection. He was a terror, that any one could see.

There was a queer shady look in the corners. She wasn't a bit afraid. The children at Bethany Home weren't allowed to be. She liked this a great deal better. She wasn't compelled to eat her whole breakfast off of oatmeal, and always had such lovely desserts for dinner. And sometimes Mrs. Borden gave her and Jack a banana or a bit of candy. Oh, yes, she would much rather live here even if Jack was bad and pinched her occasionally though his mother slapped him for it, or pinched him back real hard.

What made this lovely, rosy, golden light in the room? It was like a soft sunset. She had been saying over a lot of Mother Goose rhymes; of course she was too old for such nonsense and Jack didn't like them. And in "One, two, buckle my shoe," she wondered which she liked best: "Nineteen, twenty,

my stomach's empty," or "nineteen, twenty, I've got a plenty." That was Bethany Home where you only had so much for supper and one little cracker. And here there was plenty. It made her laugh.

And then suddenly there was a pretty little woman in the room dressed in something soft and shining and in her hand she held a stick with a bunch of gay bows at the end. She was so sweet and smiling that Marilla couldn't feel afraid.

"You don't know me, Cinderella?" she began, looking at the child.

"Oh, that isn't my name."

"You don't sit in the ashes any more but I dare say you brush up and carry them out in the morning. But I don't find Cinderellas often at this time of night.

"I wish I was Cinderella. I have a little foot though, only it don't look so in these big brogans. I put some soles inside of them, bits of velvet carpet and they keep my feet nice and warm. I do think if the glass slipper wasn't too teeny weeny I could wear it."

"You're a cute one. About the soles, now. Most children haven't any useful ideas," and

she laughed. "I knew who you were; now can you guess who I am?"

"Why if I was Cinderella you'd be a fairy godmother. But there ain't any such things; nor Santa Claus. I like the stories about 'em and I'm awful sorry. I'm only Mrs. Borden's bound-out girl, but I like it here."

"You think so?" She gave the most curious, delightful laugh. "You are Cinderella and I am the fairy godmother."

Marilla sprang up and studied her. She was so pretty and her gown looked as if it was sprinkled with diamond dust. She had never seen any one like her, but at twelve her range of observation had been rather limited.

"Well, what do you think of me?"

Marilla stood wide eyed and speechless.

"Why—you are very beautiful. Oh, I wish you were a fairy godmother! I'd like to go to fairy land. I don't think any one would mind much, but I do believe the twins would care. Bridget says there isn't any such thing and then she tells about a little girl who was toted away and had to stay seven years."

"You couldn't stay that long, and times

have changed, and you have no envious sisters. You're a rather lonely little body with no father or mother."

"Oh, how did you know that?"

She laughed, the softest, merriest laugh.

Marilla looked and looked, the little body was so sweet and mysterious.

"Oh, fairy godmothers know a great many things. They keep watch over the Cinderellas and then when they find one to their liking they appear to her, and then strange things happen."

"Yes they are strange," said the little girl.

"Would you like to go to the ball?"

"Oh! Why I'm afraid I wouldn't know what to do," hesitatingly, "I've never seen a ball."

"You can dance. I saw you dancing with an organ grinder."

"Oh, yes, I can dance that way, but—"

"Would you like to go?"

"Oh, wouldn't I!" Marilla's eyes shone with delight. "If you were a fairy godmother you could put me in some clothes."

Marilla didn't believe in it at all, but it was very funny.

"Then just step out here."

She did with the strangest sort of feeling. The fairy touched her with the wand. Her clothes fell in a heap. The big shoes dropped off. There was a shimmery pink silk frock with lace and ribbons and the daintiest pink kid slippers with diamond buckles and pink silk stockings with lovely clocks. She went dancing around the kitchen light as a feather, her eyes shining, her cheeks like roses, her lips full of smiles. She was fairly bewitched.

"You'll do," exclaimed godmother, and she threw a beautiful white cloak about her.

"But we haven't a pumpkin in the house and Bridget catches all the mice and burns them up. So you can't make a carriage—"

"There's one at the door." The hall seemed all alight and they went out. Yes, there was a coach with lamps on both sides, two horses and a driver, besides a footman who helped them in with a fine air, and drove off as gay as if it was Christmas night, though it were really March.

The streets were alight, the windows shining

She went dancing around the kitchen light as a feather.

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in splendor. Marilla had never seen anything like it. Presently they stopped at what seemed to the little girl a great palace with broad white marble steps and tall carved columns lighted by myriads of colored lights and the vestibule was hung with vines. There were statues standing round that looked like real people only they were so white from top to toe. Then they went up another beautiful stairway that led to a gallery where there were numbers of inviting little rooms, and throngs of elegantly dressed people, not any larger than boys and girls. A maid took off their wraps, and brushed Marilla's hair and it fell in golden rings all over her head.

"What beautiful hair," she exclaimed, "just like threads of silk. You must let it grow long. And such lovely eyes; but she's thin."

"Yes, rather," said godmother, "But she has dancing feet. She's a real Cinderella."

"There's so many of them and only one Prince. What a pity!"

"But each has her turn, and they are very happy."

Then Marilla glanced around the gallery. That was well lighted and had a cushioned

seat against the wall. Groups were sitting together or rambling about. And a great circular room, down stairs lighted by a magnificent chandelier whose prisms seemed in constant motion and rayed off every imaginable color with a faint musical sound.

"Oh! oh! oh!" and her eyes were full of tears though her lips smiled.

"Now we will go down," said godmother.

That was by another way. But this place was a perfect land of delight. She had never read of anything like it, but the Arabian Nights had not come in her way. Some were dancing about informally, some talking and laughing. There were the most elegantly attired boys in silks and velvets made in all pretty fashions. Silk stockings and light colored pumps, jackets trimmed with frills of lace, some with satin trousers wide enough for petticoats at the bottom and blue velvet sailor collars. There was no end of fancy attire.

"This is to be your knight, Sir Aldred. And this is the new Cinderella. Take good care of her until the Prince comes."

He bowed with most enchanting grace.

"There are so many of them!" he said, as he took her hand, "But she is the prettiest of them all."

The knight gave her hand a little squeeze and she turned rosy red.

"Come this way," and he led her along. It was odd to be introduced as Cinderella, but everybody was so sweet and cordial that she kept smiling and bowing.

Presently a cluster of bells sounded and everybody fell into line along the outer edge of the beautiful building. It was a grand march and the tapping of the feet seemed like an encore to the music. Then the first couple stepped out on the floor. Everybody dances in fairy land that is presided over by godmothers. Oh, it was just enchanting!

"Are you tired?" Sir Aldred asked presently.

"Oh, no, I never imagined anything so utterly delightful. And the splendid dressing. Are there many Cinderellas here?" a little timidly.

"Oh, yes. They love to come, but the new one always dances with the Prince. He will come in presently for you."

"Oh, I shall feel afraid." She really felt tears rushing to her eyes.

"No, you will not, for he is truly most delightful, a regular Prince Charming. You see, it is different in fairy land. You forget for awhile who you have been. That's the charm of it. And you're such a lovely dancer."

"And—and—is there any glass slipper?" She seemed to remember something about that.

"That's in the story. The Prince isn't looking for a wife now. And you couldn't dance in a stiff glass slipper. It might shiver to pieces. What pretty little feet you have! And such a lovely curly head."

It seemed quite delightful to be praised and she was glad she pleased him.

Then there was a curious quivering about the place as if every one was drawing a long breath, and the lights were mysterious, while all the little bells twinkled. And there stood the Prince.

He was taller than any of the others and very handsome. As for his attire, I couldn't begin to describe it, it was so resplendent with silk and velvet and jewels.

Sir Aldred led the little lady up to him and said: "This is Cinderella."

The Prince bowed and pressed a kiss upon her hand and she was glad it was lily white and not rough and red.

"I am very glad you are here Cinderella, I hope you will have a happy time. You look so."

"Oh I know I shall." She blushed and cast her eyes down in such a sweet fashion that he really longed to kiss the lids.

Then the music commenced and they stepped out as if they had danced together all their lives. The others formed a circle and went round them, bowing as they passed. There were such fascinating figures, changing frequently, each one prettier than the last. She wondered how they could remember; how *she* could do it. They all looked so lovely. It certainly was fairy land.

Now and then the Prince bent over and said something charming to her as if she had been a fine lady and the odd thing was that she could answer him readily. The music began to go slower and died in softest melody. Then he turned and said—

"Now we will go out and have some refreshments. You must be tired after all this dancing, but you don't look it at all."

"Oh, I feel as if I could dance all night. I believe I am bewitched."

He gave her the sweetest smile that any Cinderella ever had.

"I am very glad. Sometimes they think of the ashes and cinders and wonder whether the pleasure will last. Then the lightness goes out of their feet and the smiles from their rosy lips. The thing is to enjoy it while you are here. You are a very delightful Cinderella; I must ask godmother to keep a watch over you. I hope to meet you again."

The banquet room was beautiful as well; there was a great oval table with a chandelier shedding a thousand lights from the gorgeous prisms. Underneath was a tiny lake full of blooming water lillies. There were mounds of fruit and flowers, nuts from all over the world, piles of cake, candied fruit, ices made in all kinds of shape. The most beautiful plates and dishes, glass and crystal and servants piling up dainties and pouring out fragrant drinks.

At the head sat the Prince and Cinderella. He rose and drank to her health and good fortune with the most exquisite verse and Sir Aldred returned with a charming reply. Certainly there were no envious or jealous sisters. Every one was so merry and talked with his or her neighbor, and every girl had a knight who was devoted to her. Were they all Cinderellas, and had the Prince been as delightful to them? Every face beamed with wondrous satisfaction.

"But I don't understand it at all," and she glanced up wonderingly.

"Oh, you don't have to in fairy land. You just take all the pleasure that comes. You are not thinking of all the tomorrows. There will be something nice and pleasant if you look for it in the right place. For little Cinderella, we must not be looking for tomorrow's joy. You cannot find them tonight. There are flowers that fold their leaves but will open again tomorrow. You would be short sighted to sit down and cry tonight about it."

Marilla was a good deal puzzled.

"You must be a happy little Cinderella when you have been to fairy land. You must

not lose faith in fairy godmothers. They come at unexpected times and in different guise. And that is what keeps the world bright and the heart young, and sometime the real Prince comes."

Her heart beat with a mysterious joy. She was full of gladness.

Then they walked around and all the other Cinderellas seemed so happy when he smiled and spoke to them. The beautiful music went on. Here and there groups were dancing again.

And then it seemed as if a giant caught her and almost shook her to pieces, and the beautiful lights wavered and vanished. She was brought upon her feet with a force that would have shivered any glass slipper.

"You little huzzy! What are you doing up this time of night, instead of asleep in bed? Rouse up! rouse up! Lucky you didn't let my fire go out this cold night! Come, hustle!"

There seemed a sort of crash. Marilla glanced around with half-opened eyes. Yes, this was the old kitchen. There was Bridget with the lighted end of a candle in the tin candlestick.

"Come! get along, sleepy head. She gave her a push up the stairs and through the halls, half scolding her but not cross. It's a wonder the gobble sirs didn't come after you. If you'd been carried off now! It's awful cold. I'd sleep in my stockings and they'll be good and warm in the morning."

Marilla hustled off her clothes, wrapped herself in an old blanket and tumbled into bed in a little heap. But there was some mysterious music floating through her brain and a fragrance in the air. The Prince smiled down into her eyes, and the fairy godmother she should always believe in. For she had been to real fairy land; that was the truth.

CHAPTER II

JACK

The Bordens were nice, ordinary people enjoying life in a commonplace way. There was Mr. Jack Borden, the junior partner in a fairly successful law firm, his wife an averagely nice, sensible body, Miss Florence, her husband's sister, a bright girl of three and twenty, whose lover was in South America on a five years' contract, with one year yet to serve.

After the twins were born they tried a grown nurse-maid who bored them by sitting around when she was upstairs and making many excuses to get down to the kitchen, where she disputed with Bridget who declared one or the other of them must go, and they simply could not give up Bridget. The babies slept a good deal of the time and only cried when they were hungry. The mother and aunt thought them the dearest things and their father was as proud of them as a man could well be. If it wasn't for giving them

an airing now and then—but when it came pleasant weather they *must* be taken out.

Aunt Hetty Vanderveer who was queer and going on to eighty, who couldn't live with a relative for they always wanted to borrow her money, got tangled up in a house on which she had a mortgage, and called her grandnephew, Mr. John Borden to her rescue. She took the house and persuaded them to come there, and she would live with them on certain conditions. She was to have the third floor front room and the store room, get her breakfast and tea and take dinner with them though it was their luncheon. Night dinners she despised. She entertained herself sewing patchwork, a dressmaker sent her bags of silk pieces; knitting baby socks and stockings and reading novels. They did get along very well though it made a good deal of running up and down.

The spare room and Bridget's room was on this floor. On the second, two sleeping chambers, the nusery and the bath. Down stairs a long parlor and a dining room, with a basement kitchen which Bridget declared she liked above all things. A woman came to

do the washing and ironing, Bridget's nephew took out the ashes and swept the stoop and sidewalk. Bridget was a strong, healthy, good natured Irish woman when you didn't meddle with her, and the ladies were very glad not to meddle. But some one for the babies they must have.

One day a friend came in for a subscription to some of her charities and heard the appeal.

"Now, I'll tell you just what to do," she said "Go over to the Bethany Home, you take the car out to the Melincourt Road that passes it. Ask for Mrs. Johnson. They have two girls; they put them out when they are twelve. And since you only want some one to amuse the babies and take them out, and she will be growing older all the time, you see; you can bring her up in your ways. Yes, that is what I'd do."

Mrs. Borden followed the advice. There was a stout, rather vacant looking German girl, a good worker who delighted in scrubbing and scouring and who would make an excellent kitchen maid. The other was Marilla Bond, an orphan with no relatives that any one knew; a fair, nice looking intelligent

child, with light curly hair cropped close, rather slim, and with a certain ready, alert look that was attractive.

Mrs. Borden brought her home for a month's trial. She took to the babies at once, and Jack took to her. Oddly enough, so did Bridget. She had such a quaint sweet way of saying, "Yes'm" and "No'm;" she did what she was told to do with alacrity, she ran up and down stairs on numberless errands. She was a very good reader and at first, Jack kept her busy in this respect. But she wanted to hear about lions and tigers and men killing them and Indian fights and matters that didn't please the little girl at all. Mother Goose was babyish.

The twins sat on a blanket on the floor and sometimes rolled around a little. She played with them, talked to them and they really listened to the stories that she acted off and laughed gleefully.

"They certainly *are* intelligent," Aunt Florence said with pride.

On nice sunny days when it was not very cold she took them out in the carriage. They were carried down and put in it, then brought

up again. Their mother "wasn't going to have any nurse breaking their backs by a fall."

So when the month of probation was ended, Marilla was bound to Mr. and Mrs. John Borden, to be clothed and fed and sent to school for half a year. She really did like her new home. Only if it wasn't for Jack! He pinched her sometimes, and once he kicked her but his mother gave him a good trouncing.

The twins had some bread and milk and were put to bed at six. Then Cinderella went down stairs but not to sit in the ashes. She did numerous things for Bridget and they had a cozy dinner together, always a dessert, and they were so good.

"If Jack only wouldn't run away," she said. "You see I can't leave the babies, and I am so afraid he will get lost."

"Let him get lost then; that'll bring his mother to her senses, and you tell her."

He did come near it one day. She took the babies home and explained and then said she would go and find him.

Aunt Florence went with her. They had quite a long search and finally asked the

policeman, who said: "there was a little boy down here on a stoop, crying."

Jack, sure enough, and he was very glad to be found. His mother kept him in the house for two days and then he promised to be very good.

"Now, if you make any trouble you shall not go out for a whole week."

The babies hadn't gone much farther than "*agoo, agoo,*" but Marilla tried her best to make them talk. They each had a rubber doll and the child would dance them up and down and make them turn somersaults and stand on their heads, and invent every sort of grotesque action.

Jack was a good looking little fellow and had been spoiled in the earlier years. He was a little afraid of his father, and sometimes his mother *would* make him mind, but he was very full of badness.

Aunt Florence wanted some silk and twist and spools of cotton one morning.

"You could find your way down to Grand street where the stores are, couldn't you Marilla—where we went that Saturday night?"

"Oh, yes. Down there opposite the park."

"Yes. It's a big store. Day and Belden. I'll write it out for you and you may take my Leggy bag. Be sure and put the change in it before you leave the store."

"Yes'm," with her sweet accent.

"She may take Jack, and the babies will have a good long nap. Now Jack, you must be very good and mind Marilla, or you shan't go out again for a week."

Jack said he would. He looked very pretty in his brown coat with its fur collar, and his brown mittens.

"Give me a penny a'cause I'm gonter be good."

"I'll wait and see whether you are going to good or not."

Jack stood it pretty well until they reached the little park which was a rather long triangle with a few trees in it. Here he made a sudden dash and was off like a squirrel.

Marilla was after him. "Go it sonny," cried a man laughing, but she gained on him and took him by the arm with a jerk that nearly capsized them both.

He could not pull away. She marched him across the street and found the store, and asked

for the notion department. There were the spools of all kinds.

"Will you please open the bag and find an order in it," she said in a very nice manner.

The girl smiled. "Three spools of silk, two twist, black cotton number 60, white cotton, 60, 70 and 80."

She put up the order and sent the money whizzing to the cash clerk, handing the bag to Marilla.

"What's that thing like a railroad for?" asked Jack, keeping his eyes upon it.

"That carries the money."

"Gee! I wish I had one at home!"

The change came back. Marilla opened the bag to put it in and used both hands. Jack was off like a flash, turning here and there through the aisles. Clear down to the end of the store was a toy department. Marilla was almost up to him when he grabbed a handful of toys and ran on.

"Oh, do please stop him!" she cried to the clerk.

Two or three joined the chase. Finding they were gaining on him he threw down the articles and stamped furiously upon them.

"What is all this row?" asked the floor walker.

"The little boy snatched the toys and ran," said the young clerk.

"Oh, Jack, how could you!" cried Marilla.

Jack laughed insolently.

"Is he your brother?" in a sharp tone.

"I'm only the nurse girl, please, sir," and Marilla began to cry.

The floor walker shook Jack until he was purple in the face.

"You little thief! You ought to go to the Station House. I've half a mind to send you!"

"Oh, please don't," pleaded Marilla. She stooped to pick up some of the broken pieces. "I think his mother will pay for them."

"Who's his mother?"

"Mrs. John Borden, 138 Arch Street."

"What brought you in the store."

"I was sent to buy some things. They are in this bag, and—the change."

A gentleman came up to inquire into the matter.

"These children ought to be taught a lesson. That Granford boy carried off an expensive toy the other night and I sent a

note to his mother that brought her to terms at once. See what is the value of these things."

The counter girl began to place the pieces together and examine the marks.

"It is—sixty-seven cents."

"That's too much. We'll send a note to his mother, and young sir, if you dare to come in this store again, we'll send you to jail, I think."

Quite a crowd had collected. One lady looked at him sharply.

"Why, it's little Jack Borden," she said. "What's the matter?"

Marilla told the story over.

"I don't care," Jack flung out. "I just stamped on the old things."

"Take that to Mrs. Borden," and the man handed Marilla a folded note. "Now, I'll see you out, young sir."

Marilla trembled from head to foot. She was very much ashamed though none of it had been her fault. But what would Mrs. Borden say? What if Mrs. Borden should send her back to the Bethany Home! Oh, she did not want to go. But she could not manage Jack.

The young man stopped short when they reached the house, "I ain't comin' in just now," he said decidedly.

When Marilla was in the house she always answered the door bell. Bridget protested she could not run up and down so much and she didn't always hear it. Miss Florence came now.

"Oh, Marilla, what's the matter?"

"Jack has run off down the street. And, oh, Miss Florence"—ending in a fit of crying.

"What *is* the matter? Did you lose the money?"

"Oh, no, here is everything and the change. But Jack—"

"Come upstairs and tell us." Miss Florence opened the bag, counted the change, took out the parcels and a note.

"Why, what is this?"

"The man told me to bring it home. I held Jack's hand tight all the way down to the store and gave the girl the bag because I couldn't open it with one hand. She took out the money and put in the parcel and gave it to me and said, 'Wait for the change.' When it came she handed it to me and turned away, and when

I was putting it in the bag Jack ran off. You know how the paths go in and out. I looked and looked and saw him over at the toy counter, but before I could reach him he snatched a lot of things and ran, and the girl went after him, too, and then he threw them down and stamped on them and ever so many people came and the man was very angry——"

Marilla cried as if her little heart had been broken. Miss Florence handed the note to her sister who had been listening in amaze.

"Marilla," began Florence, "you have done the errand very well. Don't cry, child. We shouldn't have let Jack go with you."

Mrs. Borden's face turned very red. "A great fuss about sixty-seven cents. Accidents will happen."

"But throwing them down and stamping on them was no accident, Amy. That child *is* dreadful. He doesn't mind Marilla when he is out of our sight, hardly when he is in it. And I don't know what the babies would do without her."

They began to cry now. They always cried together and lustily.

"Where's Jack?" asked his mother.

"He ran down the street."

"Don't worry about Jack, Marilla; you go down and get the babies' bread and milk ready."

Marilla went and of course told the mishap to Bridget.

"That young 'un 'll get in prison some day; you see! He's a rascal through and through, a mean dirty spalpeen, a holy terror! And if they set to blaming you, I'll threaten to leave; that I will."

"You don't think they'll send me back to Bethany Home?" in a distressed tone.

"They'd be big fools to! I don't know where they'd get another like you. If that Jack was mine, I'd skin him alive and hang him out bare naked, the mean little thief! And the missus knows he's bad through and through."

Marilla took the basin of dinner upstairs. The babies had hushed their crying and gave a sort of joyous howl at the sight. Florence had talked her sister-in-law into a more reasonable view of the case. Then the babies were fed and comforted and sat on the blanket with playthings about them. They could

climb up a little by chairs, but they were too heavy for much activity.

Mrs. Borden picked up her slipper and went down stairs, opening the front door. Jack was slowly sauntering back and she beckoned to him. He had begun to think it was feeding time as well as the babies.

"I was gone, to put 'em back—" he began—

She took off his pretty coat and then she did spank him for good. Meanwhile the bell rang for lunch. She put him on a chair in the end of the parlor and said—

"Now you sit there. If you dare to get up you'll get some more. And all the lunch you can have will be a piece of bread without any butter." And she left the door open so she could see if he ventured down.

But after the bread he went up stairs and straight to Marilla.

"You old tell tale! You'll be rid on a rail and dumped in the river," and he kicked at her.

"The man sent a note——"

"Jack," interposed his mother sternly.

Then the babies were bundled up and carried down stairs, well wrapped up for their

ride. Marilla enjoyed the outing when she did'nt have Jack. She went down again by the stores. There were two she delighted in, book and stationery stores. One window was full of magazines and papers, and she read bits here and there. She was so fond of reading and she would piece out the page she read with her own imaginings. She always staid out two hours, more when it was pleasant, and brought back the babies, rosy and bright eyed.

"Jack," and his father took him on his knee that evening, "you have been a very bad boy today. You have been a thief. Suppose the man had sent you to the Station House?"

"I wouldn't a' gone."

"Well, you would have had to. Thieves break laws and are sent to prison. And there you broke up the toys. You must never go in a store again without your mother."

"M'rilla took me in."

"And mother and Auntie supposed they could trust you. Now they can't. You will have to be watched and punished, and I am

going to do it. There'll be no more Sunday walks with me, either."

"Can't I go alone?"

"Not until you are a good boy."

Jack looked rather sober, but his father saw he was not making much impression. And presently his mother put him to bed.

"I really don't know what to do with Jack," his mother said on her return, taking up her sewing.

"Listen to this," and Mr. Borden read from the paper an account of three boys who had managed to enter a grocery store and steal some quite valuable stock. Ages, seven, nine and ten.

"I'd rather bury Jack tomorrow than have such a thing published about him," he said.

"And Jack used to be so nice," returned his mother with a sigh.

"We've indulged him too much, and we have idealized childhood too much; we've laughed at his smart tricks and his saucy replies, and tried high moral suasion, but we must turn over a new leaf. When he is bad he must be punished severely enough

to make an impression. Are you sure of that girl, Marilla?"

"Yes. She's truthful and so sweet to the babies. Bridget says she wouldn't even touch a piece of cake without asking for it. But I think she does sometimes shield Jack. He has a nasty way of pinching and I do slap him for it. I'm afraid of his pinching the babies. But we never do leave him alone with them."

"See here," began Florence, "why not send him to Kindergarten. The new term is just beginning. I think boys ought to be with other boys. And those classes are made so entertaining. The many employments take a child's mind off of mischief, and they are trained in manners. Oh dear! think, what a blessed time we should have!"

"I don't know but it is a good idea," said Jack's father. "He will have to mix with children some time, and our training hasn't proved such a brilliant success. Oh, I *do* want him to grow up a nice boy. But boys seem an awful risk now-a-days. I never knew so many youthful criminals."

"I'd like to know who that woman was who

recognized Jack in the store. That mortifies me awfully."

"And it will get told all over, I know," returned Aunt Florence.

"Well, children do out grow a good many of these disagreeable capers."

The next night Mr. Borden brought home something in a paper bag and Jack begged the bag "to bust," watching his father as he shook out a leather strap cut in thongs and said—

"Now, Jack, every time you do any naughty, ugly thing, I am going to punish you with this strap. You must not pinch Marilla or the babies, not kick any one nor tell what isn't true. We want you to be a pretty good boy, otherwise you will have to be sent to the reform school."

"I'd like to go to the 'form school."

"Not much," was the comment.

"Why, I'd run away."

"There's a high fence all around, and you couldn't climb it."

"Then I'd holler like fury."

"And be put in a dark dungeon."

"There was a man in a story who dug his way out. That's what I'd do."

Arguing was useless. He was such a little fellow, but fertile in expedients.

"I don't want ever to use this strap on my little boy. I hope he will be good."

"What is good and what is bad."

"Come to bed, Jack. You're getting silly."

On Monday morning Jack went to Kindergarten. The house was like another place. And Jack was very much entertained. He soon learned what a "punch below the belt" meant, and a "biff in the eye" and several other fighting terms.

"And they're a set of gumps," he declared. "They can't read right off, they've got to write it, and I can read most anything and spell words, too. But they make pictures and lovely things, and sing. Yes, I like to go."

CHAPTER III

PLAYING HOOKEY

Marilla thought she had lovely times with Jack in school, but she did have to run up and down so much that some nights her little legs fairly ached. But now she took the babies out to the big park where she could sit and watch the merry children at play and the beds of flowers coming out, and there were the funny pussy willows and the long tails of yellow forsythia and some squirrels running around, and birds calling to each other. Then there were pretty children playing about and some nurse girls that she talked to. She felt so rested sitting here, and sometimes her thoughts went back to the March night when she had fallen asleep by the warm stove and had that wonderful, beautiful dream. She felt very happy over it. And the Cinderella meant all the little hard worked girls who had few pleasures. Oh, she wished they could all have one night in that magic fairy land.

She was learning to sew a little as well, and

she thought she should like it if there was a little more time. But the babies began to crawl around now and Voilet would pick up anything and put it in her mouth; so you had to watch her every moment. And though they generally slept from ten to twelve, there was the door to answer, little things to be done for Aunt Hetty whose bell would ring just as she had her work fixed ready to sew. Then likely she would lose her needle.

But she managed somehow to keep very sweet-tempered. She wished she *could* go to school.

"We'll see next fall," Mrs. Borden said. "The twins will be larger and less trouble."

Sundays were pretty good; Mr. Borden took out the children in the afternoon. She had to help Bridget with the vegetables for dinner, which was at midday and there was so much washing-up afterwards, at least drying the dishes, that there was barely time to go to Sunday school. But the singing was so delightful. She sang the pretty hymns over to the babies. In the evening the family generally went out or had company. So after Jack and the babies were abed she used to

read, unless Jack wouldn't go to sleep and torment her with questions that were unanswerable.

On the whole Jack had been pretty good for a fortnight. One afternoon Mrs. Borden had gone out, Miss Florence had some visitors in the parlor. Marilla had fed the babies who were laughing and crowing when Aunt Hetty's bell rang. She ran up.

"M'rilla get me some hot water, quick, and that aromatic ammonia, I'm so faint and feel queer all over. Be quick now."

She ran down, but could not run up lest she might spill the water. Aunt Hetty was gasping for breath, and leaning back in the big chair. She swallowed a little, then she went over on Marilla's shoulder and the child was frightened at her ghastly look. There was the lavender salts——

Just then there was a succession of screams from the babies. Could she leave Aunt Hetty? Miss Florence called her, then ran up stairs herself.

And this was what had happened; Jack had come home and finding no one, knew there was some candy on the closet shelf. And there

hung the strap. He wondered if it would hurt very much? The babies looked too tempting. So he began to strap them and enjoyed the howling. He was just going to leave off when Aunt Florence flew into the room.

"Oh, Jack, you cruel, wicked boy! Then she seized the strap and he soon had an opportunity to known how much it hurt.

"Marilla! Marilla!" she called.

"Oh, Miss Florence, something dreadful has happened to Aunt Hetty, and I'm fast with her.

She came up. "Oh, she looks as if she was dying or dead. Let's put her on the lounge and you go for Bridget."

"What is the matter with the children."

"Oh, go, quick! I'll tell you afterward."

The child summoned Bridget and just ran in to comfort and kiss the babies.

"Oh, Jack, you never—oh, look at their poor little hands! You bad, wicked boy!"

"If you say much, I'll give you some——"

Marilla snatched at the strap and flung it upon a high shelf. Jack wiped his eyes and went out to play. Marilla ran upstairs again.

They were fanning Aunt Hetty and bathing her face and head.

"Marilla, will you go to the parlor and ask that lady to come up here,—Mrs. Henderson. Bridget thinks—oh, and we ought to have a doctor! I must telephone."

"And then can I stay with the babies?"

"Yes, yes."

"Poor babies! Marilla fairly stopped them with witch hazel. Their little fat hands and their shoulders were swollen already. She kissed them, but she couldn't take them both and they wanted to be cuddled. So she sat down and hugged them and really cried herself.

Bridget came down, "She isn't dead but she's a mighty hard faint on her. And what happened to the children?"

Marilla explained in a broken voice.

"Oh, the murtherin' little devil! You take one and I'll comfort 'tother. But you can't lift her."

No; Marilla couldn't lift such a dead weight. Bridget walked the floor and patted Pansy and crooned over her, but the hurt was pretty deep.

Aunt Florence came down.

"She's over the faint. Mrs. Henderson is going to stay a while. Oh, poor babies!"

"I must look after my meat or it'll burn," and she gave the baby to Miss Florence.

"I'll sit in the rocking chair and you put her in my lap, I think she's hurt more than Violet. You see, I ran upstairs when Miss Hetty's bell rang, and she fell on my shoulder, and I never thought——"

"I gave it to him good, and his father'll finish him tonight. Oh, dear! Well, there comes their mother."

There was a hubhub with both babies crying again. Mrs. Borden laid aside her hat and coat and took up Violet, sent Marilla for a pitcher of milk and both babies were comforted with a drink.

"Sit on the floor and hold them. They're so heavy. Poor sweet babies."

The sobs ceased after a while. Violet fell asleep, Pansy was bathed again and grew quieter. The doctor came and said it was a bad fainting spell but that Mrs. Vanderveers heart was weak from age.

Marilla fixed Pansy's supper, fed her and

undressed her, and her mother laid her in the crib. Then she said—

"You may go and help Bridget a little with the dinner."

Marilla arranged the table and the master of the house came in. Jack sneaked in, also. Mrs. Henderson staid, so no explanations were made. Jack was very quiet and behaved beautifully, but he wanted to go to bed at once. Violet woke and had her supper and quiet was restored. Then a man came in to consult Mr. Borden about some business.

"It was awful that Jack should go at the babies so," said Mrs. Borden to her sister.

"I don't know about telling his father. You gave him one whipping——"

"And a good hard one. I'm afraid of boys getting so used to that mode of punishment that they don't mind it. But father brought up four boys in that manner and they have all made nice men. I don't see where Jack gets his badness from."

Jack's mother sighed. "And yet he can be so lovely."

"I've been considering," rejoined Florence.

"Suppose we hold this over his head for a while. I might talk to him."

"Well, we can try it."

So Aunt Florence talked to him very seriously, and said if he wasn't a better boy they would have to send him off somewhere in the country where there were no children. She would not tell his father just now, but if he ever struck or pinched the babies again she certainly would, and he would be punshed twice over. He must remember that.

He put his arms around her neck, and kissed her. "I'm awful sorry. I didn't think it hurt so," he said naively.

"Papa will hurt you a great deal more than I did," was her reply.

And then Jack had a sudden accession of goodness. His teacher was proud of him. How much was due to his pretty face and winsome manner, one couldn't quite tell, but the nursery had a lovely rest and Marilla didn't have to watch out every moment.

Mrs. Borden secretly wished the twins were prettier. They were too fat, and when she tried to diet them a little they made a terrible protest. Here they were fourteen

months old and couldn't walk yet, but they were beginning to say little words under their nurse's steady training.

Aunt Hetty made light of her attack and was soon about as usual, but she did not take long walks and laid on the lounge a good deal. "Folks can't stay young forever," she said, "and I'm getting to be quite an old lady."

Then they began to plan for a summering.

Last year they had not gone anywhere. Advertisements were answered, and Florence visited several places. They would take Marilla of course, she was coming to have a thin, worn look. Aunt Hetty would visit a grand niece, who had been begging her to come. Bridget would stay in the house, she had no fancy for cantering about. Mrs. Borden would live at home through the week and rejoin them on Saturday afternoons. They must get off soon after school closed. There was no end of sewing. Some pretty skirts were altered over for Marilla, as there was enough for full dresses in them.

The place was on Long Island, a country house with only two other boarders. It was barely a quarter of a mile from the seashore,

with a great orchard and grass all about, shady places for hammocks and numerous conveniences, besides moderate board.

Jack had not been an angel all the time. Some days he wouldn't study. Then he had two fights with boys. He threw stones at cats—sometimes dogs, and broke two or three windows which he didn't set out to do. He was getting tired of school and the weather was warm.

So one afternoon he thought he would take a walk instead. He would go out to the park where they went on Sundays. It was so warm in school. He was getting quite tired of the confinement.

He found a group of children and played with them awhile. Then they ran off home and he rambled on and on until he came to a street up a few steps. A wagon was standing there and two little boys were hanging on behind.

"Come on, its real fun," sang out one of them. "You get a good ride."

Jack thought it would be. They showed him how to hold on. The driver had been busy with an account book and now he touched up

the horses. "Hanging on" wasn't so easy Jack found, and you had to swing your legs underneath. The man paused again at a saloon and he dropped off; his hands were very tired. The man went in the place and when he came out one of the boys said—

"Hi! Mister, won't you give us a ride?"

The man laughed. "Where you want to go? I'm for Roselands."

"We want to go there," was the reply.

"Well, crawl up here. Two of you'll have to sit on the wagon bottom."

"I'm going to sit with the driver, 'cause I asked."

It wasn't a very clean floor to sit on, Jack thought, and the wagon bumped a good deal, the beer kegs rattled against each other. But the boys laughed and called it fun. There was another stop and then the driver asked who they were going to see in Roselands.

"Oh, no one. We're going just for fun."

"Where'd you live?"

The boys all lived at Newton.

"Jiminy; then you better get out and trot back. I'm going over the mountain where I put up for the night. Mebbe you can get

a ride back. It's two miles down to the place where I took you in."

"Yes, we better get out," replied the biggest boy. "Oh, we can soon foot it back. Much obliged for the ride, Mister."

The man nodded.

They sat off quite cheerily. Automobiles passed them and carriages containing ladies, one or two loaded trucks. Jack began to get very tired and lagged. "Come, hurry up," the biggest boy said. Jack ran a little distance for a change. He began to wish he was back in school. Presently a farm wagon came jogging along.

"Give us a ride?" The biggest boy's name was Dick and he seemed the spokesman.

"Yes—where ye want to go?"

"To Newton."

"I turn off at the crossroads, ye kin ride that fur."

That was a great relief. They were quite jolly again, though Jack didn't understand the fun. But when they dismounted, Dick asked him where he lived.

"In Arch Street."

It was very comfortable. She was getting a bit sleepy.

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"Well, that's clear over there," indicating it with his head. "Ta ta, little sonny."

They both laughed and Jack felt rather affronted. Over there seemed a long way. Then it was clouding up and night was coming on. He went straight along, but now he was hungry, and his little legs ached. He had been instructed if he was ever lost to ask the way to Arch Street. So he asked now.

"Oh, sonny, you're a long way from Arch Street. Keep straight on until you come to Taylor, then ask again."

Here was a bakery with a pleasant, motherly woman. He went in.

"Please ma'am, would you give me a bun? I'm lost and I can't find my way back to Arch Street."

"You poor child! Yes, and here's a cake, beside. Arch Street isn't far from the eastern end of the park. Sit and get rested. Who's your father?"

"Mr. John Borden."

The woman shook her head.

"Thank you, very much." Jack rose.

"You go straight down three blocks. Then ask a policeman. Oh, I guess you'll get home safely."

Jack walked his three blocks. Then there was a low rumble of thunder. Oh, dear! He began to cry. Was there never a policeman!

"What's the matter bub?" asked a kindly voice.

"I'm lost. I can't find my way home."

"Where is home?"

"Arch Street."

"Come on. We'll find it. It's bad to be lost. Where have you been?"

"Oh, I can't tell all the places," sobbingly.

They entered the park. Even that was large enough to get lost in. It grew darker and darker and there was a sprinkle of rain. Jack held tight to the man's hand, and it seemed as if the park was full of bears. He was so frightened. They came to one of the entrances.

"Now you keep straight on and you will come to Arch Street. Good-bye little lad. It's raining quite fast. Hook it along."

Jack *did* run. Houses began to look familiar.

Yes, here was his own street. Oh, how glad he was. He almost flew. And his father ran down the steps and caught his little wet boy in his arms.

"Oh, Jack! Jack! Amy," he cried through the open hall door, "he's here! he's here!"

There had been a great commotion, for Jack had been instructed to come straight home from school even if he went out afterward. And when it came dinnertime with no Jack, and the dreadful things that one could conjure up—being run over, being kidnapped—for he was such a pretty little fellow! Mr. Borden telephoned to the Police Precinct, to two hospitals, went out to search, inquiring of the neighboring children. No, he had not been playing with them. Mrs. Borden was wild with terror. Aunt Florence said some boy had coaxed him off somewhere, but she was desperately afraid that he laid crushed in some hospital. And now they all hugged and kissed him; and what with the fatigue, the fright and all, Jack really had an hysteric.

They rubbed him and put him in some dry clothes and gave him a dose of aromatic ammonia to steady his nerves, and then some supper. And he said he went to the park and came out somewhere, and a man took him and two other boys for a ride. Dick was such a nice, big fellow. He said nothing about hanging on behind, he had a feeling that wouldn't re-

dound to the story. And the man took them out to Roselands and wasn't coming back—"

"Roselands," cried his mother. "Oh, Jack you might have been kidnapped. Never, never go riding with any strange man. And how did you get back?"

"We walked some, then another man rode us a little way, and the boys went off and I got lost more and more and couldn't find a cop, and asked every so many people, and a woman gave me a bun and a cake, and then a man took me across the park and told me to go straight along. And I was afraid of the thunder and all, and I was wet, and oh, dear!"

"Never mind, Jack. You're safe home now. You must come straight home from school, you have always been told that."

And he hadn't been to school at all!

But he was very sleepy and his mother put him to bed and kissed him a dozen times. The scoldings would save until tomorrow.

Jack was rather languid the next morning and a little afraid. But he was the best boy in school, and brought home a note from his teacher, never suspecting his sin would find him out so soon.

Miss Collins asked his mother if she would send the reason why Jack was not at school yesterday afternoon, as they were required to put it down in the record book.

"Oh, Jack! You didn't go to school yesterday afternoon! What *were* you doing?"

Jack hung his head, "I took a little walk, and then—and then—I was afraid it was late, and some children were playing—!"

"Oh, you naughty boy! That is playing truant. I don't know what your father will say!"

"I don't want to any more. I'd rather go to school. It wasn't funny a bit. And I don't want to ride in any old wagon that jounces and jounces, and I did get so tired. What did the teacher say?"

"They have to put the true reason down in the record book. And there it will stay always. My nice little boy was a truant-player. And we shall all be so ashamed. What will your father say? And he was so afraid last night that you were killed!"

"Oh, mama, I never will do it again, never!" Jack hung round his mother's neck and cried and she cried with him, thinking of her tumult

of agony last night. And she had him safe—her little boy!

"Jack," she began presently, "can't you be brave enough to tell papa how it began. Climb up in his lap and tell him how sorry and ashamed you are."

"Will he strap me?"

"You deserve it I think. But he surely would if I told him. And when people do wrong they must bear the punishment."

"But I never will do it again."

"Tell him that, too."

Of course they talked it over at dinner time. Jack was not at all vainglorious. Afterward, he hung around and presently climbed up in his father's lap.

"My dear little son," and his father kissed him.

"But papa, I was badder than all that." Badder seemed to admit more enormity than simply bad, "I—I went in the park to walk and I staid so long that—that——"

"That you were ashamed to go back?"

"Well"—Jack had spasms of direct truth tellings now and then, like most children.

"I didn't feel so 'shamed then as when

teacher spoke of it this afternoon. It looked so pleasant I thought I'd go on. Some of the boys said it was funny to play hookey, but I don't want to do it ever again. And if I had been killed somewhere!" Jack began to cry.

The father held him close for some minutes.

"Jack," he said at length, "you have been a very bad boy, and I am glad it wasn't a happy afternoon. I hope you never will play truant again. Think how mama and I suffered not knowing what had happened to you and afraid our little boy might be brought home dead. You ought to be punished but you seem to have suffered somewhat, and I am going to trust you, only, you can't go walking with me on Sunday, and maybe there are some other pleasures you will be deprived of. I'm awfully sorry and mortified that your name must go on record down at City Hall as a truant from school. Some of my friends may see it. These things are sure to get to daylight and make your family ashamed of them, and your teachers; just try to think of that when you do the things you know are wrong, for even a little boy will

know that. Didn't something tell you staying from school was wrong?"

Jack crept closer in his father's arms. He was too young for much reasoning, and the man wondered if he would have been so penitent if he had had what boys call a real good time.

They let the matter go at that. Jack looked very wistful when his father took the babies out Sunday morning and said no word to him. He followed Marilla round as she dusted up the rooms and wanted to know about Bethany Home.

"Were the children always good?"

"Oh, no. There were a good many bad ones among them."

"Did they have a strap?"

"Yes, a bigger one than your father's."

"Will papa get a bigger one when I'm big?"

"Oh, Jack, I hope you won't need any strap. Why can't you be a good boy?"

Jack gave a long sigh. "Sometimes badness comes into your mind just sudden like."

After a pause—"Did you like Bethany Home?"

"Not as well as being here. I've told you

that forty times. And there were no little babies. And no dessert, only a teeny little bit on Sunday. And just a sweet cracker for tea."

"What makes you like the babies? They can't talk nor do anything. And they are not as pretty as I am. Folks used to say when I was real little, 'Oh, what a lovely child.' "

Marilla laughed, Jack did know that he was very good looking.

"They'll be pretty by and by. And they are real sweet. I like babies. I like kittens and little chickens."

"I like a dog. Cats scratch."

"Not unless you torment them. Now I am going down stairs to put the dishes on the table. Then I must go and help Bridget."

"Bridget won't let me come down in the kitchen. She chases me out with a stick."

"Children are a bother in the kitchen. They ask so many questions."

Then his mother and Aunt Florence came home from church, and his father with both babies asleep. He carried them upstairs.

Marilla was getting to be quite a handy table maid for all but the heavy dishes. She placed them on the dumb waiter and started

them down stairs. Mrs. Borden took off the others. When the babies were awake Marilla had to stay up with them.

Mrs. Borden dished the cream. "Jack will not have any today," his mother said.

Jack sat still with his eyes full of tears but said not a word.

But he went to Sunday school with Marilla and behaved beautifully.

"If he was always as good as this," the child thought, "how I should love him." He did not even tease for a walk, a thing she was quite afraid he would do.

CHAPTER IV

POOR CINDERELLA

Oh, how busy they were and the babies took this opportunity to begin the cutting of teeth. The auto came for Aunt Hetty. Some of the parlor furnishings were packed away, everything swathed in linen. The closing exercises of the kindergarten took place and Jack distinguished himself by repeating a pretty little poem. In September he would be six.

Then came the last week. They would go on Saturday. Sunday was Fourth of July but it would be held on Monday. Trunks were packed, the last bit of shopping done. The babies fretted and Marilla took them out morning and afternoon with strict injunctions to keep on the shady side of the street. It seemed to grow hotter and hotter. The child lost her appetite and could not eat Bridget's choice tid-bits. Oh, how her little legs ached, and her back felt sometimes as if it would fall apart.

"It's good you are going," declared Bridget.

"You're almost a skeleton. Goodness knows I shall miss you enough, and just be thinking of your coming back."

Jack had gone down town with his mother to get some sandals and slippers. She was very glad, for sometimes his talking almost set her crazy, and she really was afraid to be impatient with him.

She had found a beautiful quiet street with great trees that fairly met in the middle of it. Many of the families were away. She sat on one special stoop where the house was all shut up tight. There were no children in the street.

It seemed this day, Thursday, as if she would never get there. The babies were so heavy. She sat down on the second step, leaning against the stone column and pushed the carriage to and fro. Curious shadows went dancing before her eyes, sometimes whe could not see at all. And she was so sleepy!

Pansy threw her rattle out and cried for it. Marilla stepped down to pick it up and fell on the sidewalk. What was the matter with her legs? they seemed to have lost their strength. She crawled up again. All the world,

the trees and houses went flying round and all was dark. She was falling down—down—Poor little Cinderella!

The babies missed the soft soothing voice. They cried louded and louder, then howled. Some children came to see what was the matter two quite big boys among them. The policeman looked down from the corner and paced with his slow tread.

"What's the row here?" he asked.

A lady came down one of the stoops on the opposite side of the street; a rather tall, slim woman in a soft gray dress and hat with violets around the crown. She crossed over. The policeman had taken the girl by the shoulder and given her a rough shake.

"Those children howl enough to wake the dead, and she's asleep here."

But as he partly raised her Miss Armitage saw that her face was deadly white.

"Oh, poor child!" she cried. "What can be the matter? And whose babies are these?"

"They're Jack Borden's little sisters—twins. And thats the nuss gal," said one of the big boys.

"Do you know where they live?"

"Round in Arch street."

"Could you take them there?"

"Well—yes'm."

"Then take them," rejoined the lady.

The carriage being moved she sat down on the step and took the girl in her arms.

"She isn't dead—I see the flutter in the temple."

"Better go to the hospital," proposed the policeman.

Marilla opened her eyes and glanced up but did not seem to notice anything; then the lids fell and the beautiful long lashes shadowed her cheeks.

"Carry her to my house across the street," and she led the way.

He picked up the light burden as if it had been a feather. She opened the door and asked him to take the child upstairs and lay her on the couch.

"I am obliged to you," she said. "In a way I am in Settlement work. We'll have a doctor and see what is the matter. Then I'll decide about the hospital. And I will find out about those people."

"You're a good sort, ma'am," and he touched his hat brim to her.

"Jane," she called. "This poor child isn't exactly in a faint, but something is the matter. Get a warm bath ready and we'll put her in. I'll telephone to Dr. Richards."

"Yes—he was just going out. Would be up for a first call."

Miss Armitage undressed her. She was clean and neat, but the poor little body was painfully thin. Then they carried her to the bath. Jane rubbed her softly and she gave some responsive sighs.

"What a pretty lot of little curls and fine as silk. I do wonder who she can be?"

"She's the little nurse girl who brings those babies, twins I suppose they are, and sits on the stoop over opposite."

"What happened?"

"Well it's some sort of a collapse. Now I'll find a nice nightgown, and we'll see what the doctor says."

Marilla opened her eyes. They were a sort of blueish gray, but now very heavy and dull. Her lips moved, but the tone was very

low. It sounded as if she said "fairy godmother" and Miss Armitage smiled.

"Oh, poor little thing!"

Dr. Richards flew around in his auto.

"Oh, I thought something had happened to you," he began.

"It has," and she detailed the simple story.

He followed her up to the room. It was such a lovely, restful room. A white bed in the alcove, white window drapery, a carpet with considerable light blue in it, a dressing case, a writing desk, some books and pictures, mostly Madonnas.

"Poor child," he said. "She's been worked too hard. All her strength seems gone. And a case of heat prostration. It's been an awful day. Who is she?"

Miss Armitage told over the incident. "I have seen her sitting there several times. It is shady in the afternoon."

"Two fat babies," and he laughed. "I should think one would be enough for such a child to manage. Overwork and underfeeding I think, and the heat. I'll see if I can rouse her."

Marilla opened her eyes and the lids

seemed to fall from absolute weariness. The lips moved but made no sound.

"It is a kind of comatose state. Not knowing all that is back of it I can't quite make up my mind. If this awful heat would let up! I'll leave some drops to be given to her and will come in one my first round in the morning. I haven't been to the Settlement House yet."

"Oh, you must go. That little Mary Burns died at noon, and her mother is half crazy over it. Poor little thing, deformed and all that. This child has a nice straight body and a fine smooth skin. I'll go round in Arch street and see what I can learn about her."

"She looks worth saving if life really holds anything for her. Poor things! Why are so many sent into the world 'just to toil.' "

"I was going over——"

"Never mind now. I'll attend to it all, and see the Burns' priest. Don't be worried. These drops will keep up her strength," nodding to Marilla. "And I will report in the morning."

Dr. Richards went his way. Miss Armitage sat and considered. Perhaps it would be as

well to go to Mrs. Borden's. They would be feeling much alarmed, no doubt. She explained to Jane and put on her hat again and picked up her sun umbrella, for some streets were still in a glow. This was the best part of the city however, and there were some fine trees.

She stopped and looked in a directory. There was only one Borden living on Arch street, a Mr. John Borden, lawyer. She made a note of the number. Arch street was some distance farther west, and then only a block or so. A very nice looking three-story brick with a stone stoop. She mounted and rang the bell. There certainly was a child or children crying.

A young woman much distraught answered the door. And now positive howls greeted her ears.

"We are in such trouble," apologized the woman.

"I am Miss Armitage and live in Loraine place, nearly opposite where the little girl fainted. Did the babies get home safely?"

"Oh, we are so glad! Won't you please come up-stairs for my sister can't leave the children. We have been almost crazy! One

boy said she fell off the steps. Is she much hurt?"

"She had a bad fainting spell. The doctor came and he hardly knows what to think until tomorrow. The policeman proposed sending her to the Hospital, but I am one of the managers of the Settlement House in Beacon street, so I had her brought over to my house. A fall, you said?"

"That was what a boy said—that she tumbled off the step. Oh, Pansy dear, do hush! You miss Marilla, don't you? The best little nurse in all the world. Oh, what *can* we do without her!"

Mrs. Borden was pacing the floor with the baby's head against her shoulder and gently patting her. She did not scream now, but sobbed in a very sleepy fashion.

"You see, we are to start on Saturday noon, and we shall not come back until the middle of September. We thought it would be so nice for Marilla, too, she'd kind of run down though she wasn't at all ill. Bridget worried that she ate so little and she was growing thin."

"How long has she been with you?"

"I took her from an institution—the Bethany Home—about the middle of October. She was just twelve, the Matron said. I think she was very glad to come. She's had a good home and plenty to eat. And one funny thing is that Bridget took such a fancy to her, and though Bridget's good as gold, she has some queer streaks."

Mrs. Borden sat down and drew a long breath. Pansy had fallen asleep at last.

"And we never let her lift the children or carry them up and down. I think babies are sometimes injured for life that way in falling They used to sit on the rug and she'd tell them stories. I think she must have made them out of her head—funny things and she'd act them off and the babies would laugh and laugh—it was as good as a play. They seemed to understand every word. Marilla was a born nurse girl. But what can we do? We must have someone, and there's only such a little time."

Miss Armitage was thinking.

"Perhaps I might help you out," she said kindly. "There is a young girl with us who worked in a factory until she gave out. We

sent her to the Rest House in the country and she *did* improve, but they wouldn't take her back in the factory. She's a nice pleasant girl about seventeen."

"Oh, how good of you to think of it! But I can't pay high wages, for there'll be her board and it won't be hard. When the babies are well they are as good as kittens though they can't scamper around so much. And they're so fat they won't walk very soon. It'll just be sitting round and amusing them and looking after their food. I couldn't give more than three dollars a week—we are not at all rich," with a short laugh of apology.

"I think Ellen would come for awhile."

"And I should want Marilla as soon as she was well enough. You see she's bound-out to me, and we all like her so much. I don't see what *could* have happened to her. She has been out in the fresh air most of the time and we always tell her to go slow with the babies, not rush along in the heat. What did she say?"

"Oh, she hasn't spoken at all. She lies just unconscious."

"Good gracious! Oh, you don't think she

will die?" and Mrs. Borden really turned pale with fright.

"A person sometimes lies that way for days when overcome with the heat. The doctor can tell better tomorrow."

"Oh, poor little Marilla! She is so sweet-tempered. And you were so good not to send her off to a hospital. How ever should we have found her! There is so little time. When shall we hear about this other girl?"

"I will telephone as soon as I go home and tell them to send her in the morning," and Miss Armitage rose.

"We are so much obliged." She followed her visitor out in the hall.

"Do not come down," said Miss Armitage. "And I hope the babies will improve."

"Thank you—for everything."

The sun was going down and some stray wafts of wind wandered along, which made the heat rather more endurable.

"Jane," she said as she walked into the room, "did you notice any bruise on the child's head while you were bathing her. She fell off of the steps it seemed."

"There was none on her forehead. Her hair

is very thick and I really did not look only to see that it was in a nice, clean condition. She hasn't suffered for want of cleanliness."

Then she told Jane all she had learned, adding:

"They seem very nice kind of people. But oh! those babies!"

Miss Armitage telephoned to the settlement House, stating the case.

"Yes, Ellen Day was still there and would be very glad of the position. She would go the first thing in the morning."

Jane insisted on bringing in a cot and sleeping beside the little girl who lay quite as still as if she were dead. Now and then she gave her the drops and fanned the air about her. The morning came and the city was astir again. But it was quiet in Loraine place. So many had gone away and there were no trolleys nearby.

They looked over Marilla's head and found one spot above the ear that had a small bit of discoloration, but it was not in a dangerous place. The doctor came in.

"I did not think there would be much change," he said. Then he tried to rouse her. Jane held her up while they gave her a little milk which she swallowed without difficulty. She opened her eyes and closed them again, then lay quiet.

He listened to Miss Armitage's interview and nodded as she went along.

"The child is terribly run down. I think she has worked harder than any one imagined. But they seem to have appreciated her."

No one could guess the strain of talking so incessantly to amuse the babies, of reading to Jack, of having eyes all over to see that he did not torment the little ones, push their playthings out of the way, give them sly pinches or tweak their hair. She did hate to tell tales on him. And when he coaxed to go out with her he was a constant care. School had been closed for a fortnight. Oh, how tired she was every night!

"You don't eat more than a bird," Bridget would complain.

"But I'm never hungry now, I shall be so glad when we get to the real country, and grass, and everything. I'm so tired of the

rows and rows of red brick houses, and they all seem so hot."

And now Bridget was almost heart broken.

Ellen Day came in to tell Miss Armitage how glad she was that a good word had been spoken for her. "And she was sure she should like the ladies and the pretty little boy. But how fat the babies were and not a bit pretty. They were to start at twelve tomorrow."

It was still hot, but in the afternoon it clouded up and the evening brought a most refreshing shower. The hot wave was broken.

Sunday afternoon they had rolled the couch over by the window. Miss Armitage sat reading. Jane had gone out for a walk. The child seemed to have grown thinner in these few days.

She opened her eyes slowly and looked intently at the woman sitting there in her soft, white attire. She was so sweet and pretty.

"Are you a fairy godmother?" Marilla asked in a weak, wandering tone.

"A—what?" smiling in surprise.

"A fairy godmother. You don't look like the other one, but then it was night and we went to the King's ball. Oh, it was so splendid!"

"When was that?" in a soft, persuasive tone.

"Oh, a long time ago. I was Cinderella, and every new Cinderella dances with the Prince, you know. Only they can't dance but once with him."

It was something the child had read, doubtless.

"Do you feel better?" she asked tenderly.

Marilla glanced around and sighed. Then she said in a frightened tone—

"Oh, where am I? And where are the babies? I heard them cry."

"You are all safe and right. And the babies and all the family went down on Long Island."

"It's so queer."

The eyelids drooped again and she fell asleep.

An hour later she woke, and seemed to study the room and the lady.

"I never was at fairy land but that once," she said slowly. "Then there was such lovely music and dancing and everybody was so gay. It's beautiful here and you are very sweet. I don't know how I came here. Must I go back?"

"Not until you are well. You have been ill. And you were brought here——"

"I can't think. There were the babies. I went to get something and stumbled and everything looked so queer, blue and red and full of stars, and then I went down and down and all was dark and I kept going down——"

"You fainted and were brought over here. The babies were taken home. And you have been ill, but now you are going to get well."

"I've never been real ill. There were the measles once in the home and we had to stay in bed. I was so hungry. Oh, do you know where Bridget is? She was so good to me."

"She is at Mr. Borden's."

"Could I please to have a drink?"

Miss Armitage brought a glass of milk.

"Would you like something to eat—a bit of custard?"

"I'm not hungry. But the milk was good. Thank you. Who brought me back from that great dark pit?"

"The doctor, I guess," with a smile.

"Could I be turned over?"

Miss Armitage turned her so her face was toward the sky. She drew a long breath.

"Do you mind if I should go to sleep?"

"Oh, no, and I'll read to you."

The sweet voice soon lulled her to sleep. And she did not speak again all through the evening, but was rather restless all night. No one had to watch with her now, but Miss Armitage was troubled at the soft, long sighs.

CHAPTER V

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

Marilla wondered what the bells were ringing for. And then pistols were firing. Oh, yes, it was Fourth of July. She would get up—but her thin legs gave way and her head spun round. All the room was strange, and everybody seemed mixed up. Then a soft voice said—

"I hope you are better this morning."

"I feel—queer—"

The face was flushed, the little hands were hot.

"The doctor was afraid of fever," Miss Armitage said to Jane, "and it has come."

But the doctor was in early. There would be so many calls on him, by and by.

"Yes, it is fever. She seemed better yesterday. And she can't spare any strength to be burned up, so we must do our best. I don't dare treat her as you would a robust child, but I'll give her something every hour, and get in again before night. Oh, no, I think it is

hardly critical," in answer to the lady's anxious look.

Marilla did not seem to know any one. She muttered little catches of talk about the babies and Jack, always pleading with him not to do this or that. Once she laughed and waved her hand to and fro as if in response to music and said—"All the Cinderellas! How beautiful!"

A tall, plain-looking Irish woman came in at midafternoon.

"Tell her it's Bridget," she said. "Can't I see her?"

"Oh, yes," replied Miss Armitage, "But I am afraid she will not recognize you."

So she led the way up-stairs. Marilla lay on the cot now and was moving her hands as if acting something.

"Ah, the dear!" Bridget knelt down by the side of the bed. "Don't you remember Bridget whose come to care for you so much? Ah dear! It's meself that sorry enough to see ye lyin' this way, thin as a ghost."

She opened her eyes, "Bridget! Oh, you know the night I went to the ball and fairy godmother turned my old frock into the beau-

tifullest frock, all lace and ribbons. And I danced with the Prince and had such a lovely time!"

Then the eyelids fell and she lapsed into unconsciousness.

Miss Armitage glanced inquiringly.

"It was along of a dream that she had once; it *was* a dream for such things don't happen now-a-days, more's the pity. But she always believes it real and true, the dear, that she was Cinderella, and had been there. She's the best little thing I ever saw, and she never told you a lie or took a bit of cake without asking. In the begining she must have belonged to some nice folks; and just look at her pretty hands and feet, light and small enough to dance at any king's ball. But it's hard on the nice ones that have to go to Homes and be put out for little drudges. Though they're nice people, the Bordens, as you may guess by my stayin' with 'em goin' on five year."

"And she wasn't over-worked," ventured Miss Armitage. "She is so thin."

"She's been falling away dreadful the last month. Well, she wasn't and she was. There was an old lady living up on the third floor,

an aunt or something and she was afraid of bad spells, she did have some, and she'd ring her bell for Marilla an' it would be upstairs an' down, sometimes way down to my kitchen, and lugging those two fat babies up and down the street——"

"Did she have to carry them any?"

"Oh, no. The mistress didn't want her to lift them. She was afraid of a fall and their backs would get broken. So when they were big enough they sat on the floor and she talked to them and told them funny things and acted 'em off and laughed, and they'd laugh too. It was like a play to see 'em. And they'd jabber back and she'd make b'lieve she understood it all. She was a wonderful child's nurse an' there'll be trouble enough without her. But the babies went to bed early an' then she'd come down an' wipe the dishes for me an' they made no call on her. But Jack was a holy terror, he was that bad, but he went to school in the spring. If he was mine I'd skin him alive. But it was hard dragging them fat, heavy things around. Will you tell me just how you come to find her? They've

missed her so. They screech enough to raise the dead, an' I know it's for her."

Miss Armitage told the incident over.

"The saints bless and protect you ma'am for not lettin' her be sent to a hospital! But do you think she *can* get well? And if that other maid suits, couldn't you keep her here all summer and let her get good and strong? I'm going out to my cousin at Fairfield to stay until next Monday. The boss will be down with his folks until then, and all the vallerbles have been sent out of the house so we can leave it alone. And when I come back we may have a plan for the poor dear that isn't baby tendin'. O the little darlin'! Don't let her die, ma'am, she's so nice and sweet!"

She caught the little hand and kissed it, and winked away the tears that glistened in her eyes.

"I'll do my best, you may be sure. And when you come back, I shall be glad to have a call from you. And by that time she may know us all. Thank you for your sympathy."

Bridget nodded and turned away. Miss Armitage studied the little girl with a new interest. She had seen beautiful children

among the very poor, in the slums, with no ancestry back of them. There was something about this child—not beauty either, that set one to thinking. She must learn something about her.

And then she smiled over the fancy of being Cinderella and dancing with the Prince at the ball. What a happy dream it must have been for the child! She was glad to hear that she had not been badly treated or ill fed. She could trust the kindly Bridget for that.

When the doctor came in Sunday morning a smile lighted up his face.

"A real improvement," he exclaimed. "No fever and a normal temperature. Pulse stronger. Now, with nourishing diet and some salt in the baths we shall have her about again, though I've had several patients lie weeks in this state in the hot weather."

Marilla glanced up and smiled back.

"Why, I feel all well,' she began. "Couldn't I get up."

"Yes," said Miss Armitage. "Jane will you bring that small pink kimona and put it on."

She took the doctor over in the bay window.

"The Borden's cook came in to see the child. She seemed very fond of her and said she was the sweetest little thing. And that she was wonderful with the babies. I was glad she had not been 'put upon' as they say over to the house. And that she always had enough to eat. And she wasn't allowed to lift the babies——"

"But dragged them about in the carriage. Such children are not strong enough for nurse-maids. She was pretty well used up, and she'll be sometime getting over it."

"I've taken a curious fancy to the child. Jane thinks she must have belonged to what we call 'nice people.' She flattered me by asking, the first coherent words she uttered if I was not 'a fairy godmother?' Think of that!" smiling.

"Well, *I* think you have been that many a time. I wonder you haven't filled the house with children.

"I'm always full of pity for them. But when they are cured and put in some place where they can do their best, and have a little love and care, I go on to the next. I do not believe I am a real missionary, and I

have a theory—it may not be a very noble one," and a soft color suffused her fine face, "that people who bring children into the world ought to be made to feel the responsibility of them and not shift them on society at large, trusting Providence to take care of them."

"That is what ought to be taught—the responsibility of children. Women as well as men sin in this respect. The woman who forgives the drunken husband and takes him back until tired of working he goes off again leaving another child to add to the poorly-fed throng she can hardly take care of. I think the man who goes off the second time, or who does not take care of the children he has, should be put in some institution and made to earn their support. And the girls ought to be educated up to better ideas of marriage. It doesn't near always conduce to morality. I preach sermons to you—don't I?" and he gave a short laugh. "And we can never set the world straight. But these Homes and Republics are doing a good work in training children to self reliance."

Jane wrapped the little girl in the kimona and lifted her up in the reclining chair.

"Oh, that's so nice. How good you are! And everything is so lovely. Oh, I'll soon be well."

Then the little face clouded over. Oh, she truly would not mind being ill if she could stay in this beautiful house where everything was so quiet. Jane went in and out, and presently she brought a cup of broth. How good it tasted!

"Would you mind if I went back to bed? I'm so sleepy."

"Oh, no," returned Jane, and she put her gently back on the cot where she soon fell asleep.

There was slight rise of fever and restlessness about noon. She talked in broken snatches imploring Jack not to do this or that and not to pinch the babies. Then she was so tired, so tired! But about midafternoon, she seemed to rouse and come to herself and said she was hungry. There was broth and hot milk and some stewed fruit, and Jane brushed her hair that fell in a bed of rings and asked if she didn't want to sit up. She brought her over by the window so she could

look out, but the back yard was very pretty for it was gay with blooming flowers.

Miss Armitage had been to church, and at two she had a class of young girls who were clerks in stores. Half of them were going away on Monday to the Rest House for a week, and they were full of that. Two of them had never been before. Was it like Coney Island?

"It is not far from the shore, the broad Sound that leads out to the ocean. But there are not side shows. Just rowing and bathing, and a ride every day in a big omnibus. And plenty of girls. Oh, you won't be lonseome;" and Miss Armitage smiled.

"Another girl and I went away last summer to a house that wasn't country but a beautiful street with lawns in front. There were three ladies, and oh, they were so particular. They did not have any story papers and the books were all dull and religious and if you took up one you must put it back in the same place. They didn't like us to talk 'store' nor sing any street songs and one lady only played hymns on the piano. Oh, we *were* so homesick."

"The Rest House has a big farm and chick-

ens and two cows, and a tennis court and croquet. And there are lovely walks. And hammocks and swings."

"That's the ticket!" said one of the girls. "You want some fun."

Miss Armitage did not check her. She thought of the amusements and pleasures of her youth. Then she came home to her little girl whose face lighted up with gladness, and who put out her thin hand.

"You look lovely," Marilla said. "And I'm getting almost well."

"That is good news," and the lady smiled.

"Only it seems so queer when I try to think. It is such a long while. I seem to have been lost and couldn't find my way out. Do you know where the babies are?"

"They all went down to Long Island. I sent them a new girl. And Bridget was here to inquire about you."

"Oh, she was so good to me. I was a little afraid of her at first, especially when she said she'd 'skin me alive.' Don't you think it would hurt dreadfully? She used to threaten Jack, but she never did it. And she said that about the fairy godmother and the King's

ball was a dream. What is it that goes to strange places when you are asleep? And how can you enjoy and remember all, and hear the music for days afterward? If there are two lives, one for day and one for night, why doesn't the night one go straight on?"

"You'll have to ask the doctor these curious puzzles. They are beyond me."

"Is Bridget at the house?" she inquired after a moment's thought.

"She was going away to some cousin to stay a week as Mr. Borden will be down to—Bayside, I think it is, all the week."

"When I get well I suppose I shall have to go back to the babies. You know I am a bound out girl—until I am eighteen. But they'll be growing bigger all the time. I wish they were as pretty as Jack. Don't you think all babies ought to be pretty? And have curly hair?"

"I think the curly hair quite an addition."

"There's another puzzle. Why should some hair curl and some hair keep straight?"

"I don't know. But your's is curly," smiling.

"Yes, I like it. At the Home there were

two other girls with curly hair. And the nurse said it made us vain, so she cut it close to the skin and she said it wouldn't curl any more. That was last summer. But it did when it grew out, and I was glad. I tried to make the babies curl, and Mrs. Borden said she'd give me a silver dollar if I could. But it was *so* straight and there wasn't much of it. Do you remember the fat little girl of the Campbell's Soups? The babies look a good deal like her. They have high foreheads and round eyes full of wonder, and such chubby cheeks. But Aunt Florence said Mr. Borden was just such a baby and he isn't at all chubby now and has dark eyes. Jack's are dark. Maybe they'll grow prettier. But they're good and—funny. They laugh over everything, and they seem to understand everything I say or read to them. I wonder if they will like the new girl."

"She is very pleased and, I think, patient—four years older than you."

"Oh, suppose they didn't want me back?" and the child drew a long breath of half fear.

"There will be something else," in an assuring tone.

Marilla leaned her head back on the pillow. She had talked herself tired. How queer that was, too, when she had talked for hours to the babies.

"Would you like me to read to you?" inquired Miss Armitage.

"Oh, yes, if it's verses. There's a curious music in verses that goes all through you, keeping time to something in your brain. I just love them."

The lady found "Songs of Seven" with its musical lilt and the child listened wide-eyed as if it made pictures to her. Then the doctor came in and was very much pleased over her improvement.

But the next day she was quite languid again. She took a few steps when suddenly everything swam before her eyes and she would have fallen but for Jane's strong arm.

"Oh, you don't suppose I can never walk any more?" she cried in affright. "For there was a nurse at the Home who fell down that way and she had been very well, too. But something happened to her hips. I can't

think what they called it, and she never could walk again. They had to send her to the hospital and she could get about just a little on crutches. Oh, dear" and Marilla began to cry.

"There don't think of such a thing. It was only weakness," comforted Miss Armitage. "Once when I was ill I fainted a great many times for just nothing at all. You have not had a chance to get strong yet."

Marilla recalled seeing the nurse brought down stairs on a stretcher, they called it. And the doctor said she could never walk again. Oh, how dreadful that would be. She turned her face over on the pillow and let the tears drop silently, and she could not swallow any supper, something lay so heavy on her breast. Miss Armitage kissed her, and Marilla twined her arms around the soft white neck hardly hidden by the lace. There had never been any one to love during the later years. And her mother had been busy and away in a store.

"Don't worry, dear," said the soothing voice. "God takes care of us all."

The sun was shining the next morning and the next door canary hanging out on the back

porch was singing with all his might and main. Such long sweet warbles, such a merry staccato with little pauses, as if he asked—"Now, what do you think of that?" and the child laughed with a sense of glee. Oh, how nice it would be to be a bird. But she wouldn't want to live in a cage *all* the time.

Jane came and gave her a bath, rubbed her softly but thoroughly across the hips and up and down the spine, holding her up with one strong arm. Marilla took a frightened step, then another and laughingly flung her arms around Jane's neck, crying—

"Oh, I can walk! I can walk!"

"Why did you think you could never walk again?" Jane laughed wholesomely.

"I felt so queer—and I thought of the woman at the Home."

"But she must have been quite an old body. They do get paralyzed; children don't. Oh, you must not think of dreadful things. Come, see how you can walk."

Jane's arm was around her and she led her back to the room and dressed her. Miss Armitage came up just then and greeted her

with a happy smile. But Marilla felt shaky and was very glad to sit down on the couch.

"Now I shall bring you up some breakfast," said Jane.

"Don't you suppose I could go down and have some real breakfast at the table—not today, but sometime."

Then Marilla flushed. She was a bound-out girl and had always taken her meals with Bridget.

"Yes, I think so. We will see what the doctor says this morning. I shall have to go out presently and see twenty girls get started for a vacation. They are in stores and factories, and have two weeks in the summer, and the Rest House doesn't charge any board—they earn so little. When you are well enough to travel about, I must take you out to the House."

Maybe she wouldn't have to go back to the babies right away!

The breakfast tasted good, though it was only a poached egg and some toast. But she didn't seem very hungry, and though she felt sort of joyously well at heart her body was tired and she lay on the couch to rest. The

doctor found her quiet and there was a whimiscal light playing over his face and settling in his eyes.

"So you haven't run away yet?" he began.

"I don't believe I could run very far. Yet I seem quite well—and it's queer, too."

Jane said you fainted yesterday.

"Well it was—something, and then I was frightened—"

"Stand up a moment." He helped her to her feet, then he passed his hand down her spine and over her hips. "Does it hurt any?" he asked.

"No, not a real hurt."

"You fell off of the stoop over there, a boy said."

"The baby dropped something and I went to pick it up, I guess I stumbled. And when I turned round everything was upside down and black and I don't remember any more until I was over here. Miss Armitage was so good, is so good."

"Yes; well it might have been worse. But I think now you are on the high road to health again."

"I've never been real sick unless this is it," and she gave a vague smile.

"I think it is," nodding humorously. "The babies have been rather too much for you this hot weather. Were you very fond of them?"

"Well, they were not bad and very funny. You can't love bad people."

"Oh, can't you?"

"No, you can't," with an emphasis. "You may like them and think they're pretty and sweet sometimes, but you don't truly love them I mean you wouldn't choose them if you had you choice."

"Which you don't often have in this world. Now what would be your choice?"

"Oh, I'd like to stay here. I don't know what I'd do if I was Miss Armitage's bound-out girl. Jane does eveything and—cook does the meals. She might let me wipe the dishes. But—maybe you don't know I'm bound-out to Mrs. Borden until I'm eighteen, so I shall have to go back. And the babies need me. I'm teaching them to talk. I'm almost Cinderella, not the kitchen kind, though I wouldn't mind that with Bridget."

"I heard you went to the King's ball with a fairy godmother. Would you mind telling me?"

Marilla colored. Yes, she would be quite pretty if she wasn't so thin.

"Why it was just a dream. And I was asleep by the kitchen stove. I hadn't any belief in her at first. Oh, do you know anything about that curious part of your brain that dreams?"

"No, I do not. I think no one really does. I suppose you had been reading about Cinderella."

"I used to read it over to the babies, or tell them. But there was Red Riding Hood and Jack and the Beanstalk and Hop o' My Thumb. Jack had them all, but I never dreamed of them. And the babies seemed to understand them all. They laughed at the funny places and they looked so shocked at the dreadful things, and were so pleased when the old wolf fell down the chimney, dead. Why it was just delightful to me, only sometimes I did get tired talking so much and had to wait for my breath."

"Are you tired now?" and he listened a moment to her heart.

"Oh, no. I feel all good and rested, and Jane said I ate a nice breakfast. I'm almost well, though I wouldn't mind being ill a long, long while if I could stay here. There was a little girl once who died and went to heaven. Miss Florence had the book. That wasn't any fairy story, and I think this must be a good deal like heaven. It's so quiet with no one troubling you, and when Miss Armitage plays——"

Her soft eyes were like wind-blown lakes and the far-away sight moved him inexpressibly.

"Suppose you tell me about the dream?"

"Oh, you'll only laugh at me."

"No, I won't laugh. I never knew a Cinderella who went to the palace and danced with the King's son."

He drew her up a little in the bed and placed the pillows around her. Then he seated himself on the couch at her feet and smiled so persuasively that she really couldn't resist. She pictured the kitchen and how comfortably she had settled herself and—she really couldn't have been asleep she saw everything so plainly and, at first, she did not believe the fairy godmother.

Dr. Richards was really charmed as she went on. It was all so vivid, so beautiful. She appeared to have a better command of language than most children of her years, and the whole picture was exquisite. Why, it seemed very real to him. And her face was a study. Surely the child must be a genius, she made the things so real and not overdrawn. A veritable fairy palace.

Then she drew a long breath and a lovely smile irradiated her eyes.

"I'm so glad I went," she said in a satisfied tone, freighted with a certain joyousness that appealed to his heart. She really was transfigured at that moment. What possibilities were lying in her soul unawakened. The little bound-out girl would never, could never realize them alone in her fight with life. For he had known:

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

When a helping hand would have transplanted it into a garden of appreciation.

A sudden fatherhood stirred within him. He had thought more than once of the woman he would like for his wife; now he wanted this little girl to grow up by his side and bloom with the sacred joy within her.

"I'm glad, too," he said in a strange, full voice that trembled with emotion.

CHAPTER VI

DOCTOR RICHARDS

Doctor Richards went slowly down stairs, Miss Armitage let herself in with her latch key.

"How is my little patient today?" she asked.

"Stronger in some respects. But I don't quite like the heart action. And I'm afraid I haven't improved it any."

"Oh, you did not scold her—?" in a half upbraiding tone.

"No, no. But I coaxed that dream story out of her and several other things. In a year or two more those Borden babies will have her all worn out. So many of the little Cinderellas don't get half a chance with life, the stolid ones do better. But she could hold an audience with that story, if she was not afraid of the audience," smiling a little, "and the lovely expressions that flit over her face! She is not the usual child."

"I've been a little afraid to think that. So

many of the child prodigies flatten out and make ordinary people."

"And some of them never get the true opportunity. I've a boy under my observation who is going to make a first-class surgeon, and I'm persuading a man to educate him. His father is going to put him in a foundry. Think of hands fitted for the nicest surgery being coarsened by contact with rough iron and hard tools. He would lose the fine touch by hard manual labor if he worked for his education. No one knows all the children sacrificed to Moloch. But the little girl! Of course she thinks of going back. She isn't even tugging at the chain. But I, for one, don't believe God puts people in just the place He wants them to stay, when He must see that they can't work out. Well—did you get the girls off?"

"Yes, and they were a delighted lot. Three only are to have their wages paid. Yet an employer told me about a week ago he had subscribed twenty-five dollars to one of these girls' summer homes. That at four dollars a week would have paid six girl's a week's wages. His name goes down on the generous

list of course. Oh, I don't wonder people like to do the things that show! The things that only God can know do not come up for credit. But it is 'deal justly' first of all."

"I'd like to stay and talk—but there is a serious matter before me. Take good care of our little girl—but I needn't charge *you*. I'll be in again tomorrow."

Miss Armitage went slowly up-stairs, paused a few moments at her desk to jot down some items. When she went through to the next room, Marilla was asleep. The little face was framed in with rings of shining hair, the lips were palely pink and parted with a half smile, the skin still showed blue veins. With a little care, such as rich people gave their children, she might grow up pretty, she would always be sweet. And the pudgy babies with their wondering eyes loved her!

Marilla improved slowly but surely. She walked from room to room, and one day she went down stairs to luncheon. Just the small round table in the recess by the side window set out with all manner of pretty dishes and a pretty glass basket of flowers in the center. And there was Jane to wait upon them, and

she seemed so pleased to have Marilla down stairs though the little girl had held tight to the bannister, lest she should lose her balance and fall. Everything looked so cool and sweet. The pictures were of woods and lakes, or a bit of sedgy river. There were fine sheer draperies at the windows, a tall vase of flowers on the beautiful centerpiece that adorned the real dining table.

Oh, how good the delicate asparagus soup tasted. And the cold chicken, the rice and the dainty potato cake. Marilla was all smiles inside, she could feel the quiver. She had not been waited on this way since the night in fairy land. Bridget had a way of shoving things toward you or asking you to get up and help yourself. But then, Bridget had done the cooking and was tired, and Marilla was glad to wait on her.

After the dessert, they went through to the drawing room and that looked lovely to the little girl. There was a portfolio of engravings on a sort of stand, and you could sit there and turn them over without any effort. There were so many pretty children among them, and some of royal families that were to be kings and queens.

The postman came and Jane brought in a handful of letters. Miss Armitage looked them over casually. Here was one from Bayside and she opened it.

"My dear Miss Armitage," it began.

"I don't know how we can thank you for taking Marilla in as you did, and by this time I hope she is about well. Mr. Borden comes up on Saturday moring to see a client and will call for Marilla at about two. We simply can't do without her. We've had the most awful time! Two babies getting four teeth apiece are enough to drive one crazy. There was no trouble about the other teeth, but I think it would not have been so bad if we'd had Marilla. They have missed her and cried after her and no one could get them asleep until they were fairly worn out and then they sobbed in the most heartbreaking way. We've had no rest day or night. Ellen is very good and patient, but the babies simply won't let her touch them. Marilla always knew just what to do. She was so entertaining. She certainly was born for a nurse girl, though I thought she was most too young when I took her, I've never let

her lift them, for they're like a lump of lead. They have grown thinner and I do hope it will keep on, unless Marilla makes them laugh so much they fat up again. They have each cut two teeth and they had to be lanced. Sister and I have had an awful time. We shall be so glad to get Marilla back. I think Ellen will not be a success as a child's nurse. And I can get her a first-class place as a parlor maid where she can have eighteen dollars a month, which I couldn't afford to pay. There is a cook and a laundress kept, so she won't lose by coming down. She is very nice, pleasant and tidy, and we had to have some one in the emergency. And poor little Marilla must have gone to a hospital but for your kindness. We are all so obliged and if Mr. Borden can be of service to you, sometime, he will be very glad. These are the favors money cannot repay.

"So if you will have Marilla ready about two o'clock on Saturday, Mr. Borden will call for her. If she needs a dress will you kindly purchase it and tell him. We have all her clothes down here. There is a beautiful big lawn with hammocks and everything, and

if she is not very strong yet she can have sea bathing which is splendid, and fine diet. And we certainly are your deeply grateful friends. "Mrs. Mary Borden."

Miss Armitage read the letter over twice and watched the pale little girl enjoying the pictures. It was not quite a heartless letter but, it had no special sympathy for the poor little Cinderella, if she did not have to sit in the ashes. Then she laid it by and went at the others.

"Please Miss Armitage, may I go upstairs? I am so tired. What do you suppose makes me feel tired so easily?"

"You are not strong yet. Yes, we will go upstairs and you must lie down."

She placed her arm around the slender body. Marilla kissed the white hand.

The doctor came in the next morning, and Miss Armitage handed him the letter.

"Has the average woman any soul!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Mrs. Borden has had no means of knowing how severe the case really was——"

"See here, she might have written on—say Tuesday and inquired. Why Marilla might

have died with just a little more. She doesn't go. She won't be strong enough to bother with teething babies in some time yet, if at all."

"Oh, you don't think——"

"She has a weak heart. It may have come from the shock and there is time enough for her to outgrow it, with care. Are you going to tire of her?"

She saw there was no doubt in his face and smiled.

"Marilla's no more trouble than a kitten. Jane is positively in love with her. I'm not sure but I shall ask to have her transferred to me."

"Hilda Armitage you ought to be the mother of girls. I don't know about the boys," with a doubtful laugh.

"I've had two disappointments."

"I told you that Conklin girl was not worth the trouble. She's singing in a vaudeville show and it *does* suit her. You couldn't get any refined ambition in that vain and silly brain. It is casting pearls before swine. Save the pearls for some one worthy. *She* doesn't go back to the Borden's this summer. When you get tired of her——"

"Shall we quarrel about her?" She glanced up with an odd, humorous smile.

"Perhaps we shall in the end, but that is a good way off. When that man comes today, just let him see Marilla."

Mr. Borden came punctually at two and was quite profuse in his thanks for Miss Armitage's kindness.

"I regret to say that Marilla has progressed very slowly. She had quite an exhausting fever at first. She was not able to come downstairs until yesterday, and lies down several times through the day."

"Is it possible! Why we thought—and we need her so much! Did you—" he flushed a little, "have a good physician?"

"An excellent one whose practice is mostly among children. He thought her quite worn out, but it was being overcome with the heat and she fell off the steps. It was near congestion of the brain I believe."

"I'm awfully sorry. We were so busy just then, and my wife was worried to death. The babies had always been so good, but I can't imagine anything being so—so dreadful as they've been for a week. I've scarcely

slept an hour at a time and Mrs. Borden is clear worn out. She thinks just the sight of Marilla would comfort them. We might go on keeping that Ellen, though the babies won't take to her. I think Marilla charmed them; but they're always been good until now. And there's four more teeth to come through," in a despairing sort of tone.

Miss Armitage had large sympathy and she felt really sorry for him. Yet how providential that Marilla had missed the care!

"You have had a very bad time, certainly, and it is fortunate that Marilla didn't give out on your hands. Would you like to see her, though I think she is asleep."

"Yes—oh yes. If we kept Ellen, don't you think she might come down next week. The sea-bathing would no doubt strengthen her."

"She has some heart weakness. I'm afraid she couldn't stand the bathing."

Then she rose and led the way up stairs.

Marilla was asleep. Mr. Borden studied her in surprise.

"Why, she's grown dreadfully thin. Yes, she must have been very ill, but like the babies,

she'd always been well. I'm awful sorry. I don't know what we shall do. Mrs. Borden had counted so on her coming. And she said over half a dozen times that I must not forget to thank you for all this kindness. You must send me the doctor's bill. She's such a nice child, Miss Armitage."

Marilla stirred and opened her eyes, closed them sighed and opened them again, then half murmured—"Oh, doctor," and started.

"Marilla, child, don't you remember Mr. Borden?"

"I had not told her about your coming. We keep her as tranquil as possible."

"Oh, Mr. Borden!" Marilla sat up. "And the babies?"

"The babies are in a very poor way, Marilla. They certainly are homesick for you. We try to keep them comforted with the promise of you. Oh, I hoped you would be well enough to go down with me this afternoon. Their mother will be telling them you will surely come. Poor little girl, but you are going to get well, aren't you? And Jack thinks there's no fun without you, and no one to read to him or tell him stories."

The child gave a vague smile. She was very glad to be away from Jack; indeed, sick babies did not appear attractive to her just now, but she said—

"Oh, I'm very sorry. The doctor said it was the heat and——"

"It was awfully hot that week. That made the babies worse. Oh, if I could take you down just to amuse them. You made them laugh so, Marilla. You know just how to do it. Well—it can't be helped, but you must try to get well and have some good of the pretty country place. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Miss Armitage is so good. And Jane and the doctor. And the yard is full of flowers. I'm very happy."

"I suppose so. Maybe you won't want to come back. But you belong to us, you know and we can't give you up."

Then he turned to go.

"Will you kiss the babies for me and tell them how sorry I am, and ask Jack not to tease them, and—and—" she swallowed over a great lump in her throat—"I shall come back when I get well."

"That's a good girl. Good-bye. I shall be in town next week and will come in and see you."

He gave the little hand a clasp. Miss Armitage went down with him. Marilla turned her face over on the pillow and cried as if her heart would break. Could she go back to the babies and Jack? And Bridget wasn't as sweet as Jane, and there was sharp Aunt Hetty——

"My dear! My dear!" said the soft voice with its infinite pity, and the sweet lips kissed hers.

"Oh, Miss Armitage, won't God take you to heaven if you pray very hard? I should hate to leave you and the dear, nice doctor, but I'm afraid I don't want to go back to the babies and Jack. I'm tired of them, and I feel as if it was foolish to be funny when there are so many sweet things to think of and books to read and your beautiful music. But I must go away from all that, and somehow heaven looks nicer. And when you die doesn't an angel come and take you in his arms and just carry you up and up to the other side of the sky where everything is

peace and loveliness, and no one will torment you——"

"Oh my child, perhaps God wants you to live here a little longer and do some work for him. The doctor would be very sorry not to have you get well. Some one might say—'He let that little girl die when he might have saved her,' but they wouldn't know it was because she kept brooding over it all the time and would make no effort to get well. God knows what is best for us."

"I didn't mind about going back. But today it seemed to be—dreadful," with a convulsive sob.

"Then we have spoiled you. Oh, I am sorry for that."

"Oh, dear Miss Armitage, don't be sorry when you have been so good. But I don't quite understand how anyone can bind you out and make you stay years if you didn't want to."

"But children do not know what is best for them. Some go wandering round the streets without any home and are picked up and put in a place almost like a prison where they have to work whether they like it or not. And some

even have cruel fathers and mothers. You said the Bordens were good to you. Would you rather be there or at the Home?"

"Oh, I'd rather be there than at the Home, but——" and she swallowed hard over a sob.

"If they worked you beyond reason or half starved you a complaint could be made but they all seem to love you——"

Miss Armitage smiled with a soft kind of sadness, as if she wished the truth were not quite so true, and the things that looked so delightful were not so often the thing it was best to give up for honor's sake.

"Yes, they do love me, babies and all, and of course I must go back when I am well enough."

Then she turned her face away and tried to keep back the tears. Jane entered at that moment and the tension was broken.

Miss Armitage read verses to her after she was in bed that evening, and kissed her good night with motherly tenderness. Then she sat for some time and thought.

Why should she have taken a fancy to this little girl? She had seen prettier children who were homeless and helped provide for them.

The Bordens were not rough or heartless. Bridget had spoken well of them. The child had a comfortable home, and she was bound in honor. It would be mean to entice her to break the bargain, to make her dissatisfied. No, she must not do that.

Miss Armitage's life lines had run along smoothly through girlhood. Her mother was a widow and they had a comfortable income. Hilda had a good voice and sang in church, gave some music lessons. There had been a lover and a dear friend and the old tradegy had occurred, that might have been more heartbreaking if her mother had not been taken ill. For days her recovery was doubtful. Then an uncle at Los Angeles besought her to come out to that genial clime and spend her remaining days with him, for now he was quite alone.

Hilda made all preparations. Such of the furniture as had intrinsic value was to be stored with a friend, the rest sold. And then Mrs. Armitage had an unlooked for relapse and Hilda went out alone.

Her uncle was a kindly man past middle life and he took an instant fancy to Hilda.

The house and its surroundings were loveliness itself. Life here would be really enchanting. It was such a beautiful world.

"But you have not seen half of it yet. Hilda, what would you say to going abroad? I've wanted to half my life. But my wife, as you have heard, was an invalid and not inclined to travel. We lost our two children. I'm not too old to start out now and view some things with the eyes of an enthusiastic young girl."

So abroad they went. She had seven years of the richness of the old world, learning languages, listening to music that stirred every pulse of her soul, haunting art galleries with loving companionship that somehow saw the best and most beautiful in everything if it was not always high art.

And then she returned alone. It seemed more of a loss than the death of her mother. She remained awhile in California settling up some business and then the longing seized her to return to the home of her youth, to have a real home where she could make the center she was still dreaming of, surround herself with friends and do something worth while with her money.

Newton had changed as well, enlarged its boundaries and made itself beautiful at the northern end. The shops and factories were kept down by the railroad center where two important lines crossed, and the river was navigable. Then Main Street was devoted to really fine stores, Brandon to offices and men's businesses, the Postoffice being there. A handsome library building adorned Broadway, there were Orphan Homes, an Old Ladies' Home, a Social Settlement.

Miss Armitage liked the aspect of it. Boarding at a hotel for awhile she looked about and decided on Loraine place. The houses stood in a row, but they had a pretty court yard in front, and a real stretch of ground at the back for grass and flowers and two fine fruit trees.

Of course old friends sought her out. Perhaps the fortune helped. The young girls of her time were matrons with growing children. How odd it seemed! She thought sometimes that she felt reprehensibly young, as if she was having girlhood over again in her heart, but it was a richer, wiser and more fervent girlhood, with the added experiences of the woman.

There were many things for her to take an interest in but they finally settled around the babies and little children's hospital, and the Settlement House. In a way, she was fond of the sweet, helpless babies who seemed so very dependent on human kindness. If there was one of her own flesh and blood it would take possession of her very soul, all her thoughts, all her affection. But it should have been hers earlier in life. Now she wanted companionship. She could not wait for it to develop and then find unpleasant traits that had come from alien blood. No, she could not adopt a baby and wait a dozen years to know whether it would satisfy or not.

She had helped two or three girls to better things. One through the last two years of High School and who was now teaching. And there had been one with a charming voice and an attractive face who had been injured in a mill and who would never have perfect use of her right hand. If she could be trained for a singer!

She and Doctor Richards came to words about her. He said plainly she would not be worth the money spent upon her. But

Miss Armitage insisted on spending it a year when the girl threw up her friend and joined a concert troupe, slipping presently into vaudeville where she *was* a success.

And out of the dispute came a proffer of love and marriage. Alvah Richards had begun life at the opposite pole from Miss Armitage. There had been a fortune, a love for the study of medicine, a degree in Vienna and one at Paris. Then most of the fortune had been swept away. He returned to America and some way drifted to Newton. They were just starting the hospital and he found plenty to do. He could live frugally. To help his still poorer fellow creatures in suffering, to restore them to strength and teach them to be useful members of society, or to comfort them and make the path easier over the river to the other country; this was his highest aim.

Miss Armitage was almost dumb with surprise. She raised her hand in entreaty.

"Oh, don't! don't," she cried. "It is quite impossible; it cannot be. I like you very much, but I am not in love. And then——"

"Then what?" with eager eyes and incisive voice.

"You had a birthday last week. I heard you telling it. You are thirty-one."

"Well—" There was a proud smile on his manly face.

"And when my birthday comes, I shall be thirty-six. When you are sixty, rich in experience, famous, a real man among men, I shall be quite an old woman. No, I shouldn't do it for your sake."

"As if a few years made any difference! Why you could discount seven years at least. Have you been loved so much that you can throw away a man's honest, honorable, tender love that will last all his life, that wear it as you like, in any stress, you can never wear out."

"Oh," she cried. "You have spoiled a splendid friendship. I liked you so much, I have no love to give in return."

"Then let us be friends again. I would rather have you for a friend than any other woman for a wife. I simply will not give you up."

So the pendulum went on swinging evenly between the two points, when Cinderella entered both lives.

And now it was Sunday morning and the chimes were pealing—"Oh, come all ye faithful." Marilla listened with a throb of joy, though she did not know the words they were saying in sweetest melody. Miss Armitage came and stood by the cot with a cordial good morning.

Marilla stretched out her hand and glanced up with an entreating sort of smile.

"Was I very bad last night?" she asked in a wistful tone.

"Bad? Why—what was it?"

"I've been thinking it over. Oh, I didn't want to go back to Mrs. Borden. It is so lovely and quiet and beautiful here. But it *is* right. I am her bound-out girl, and I *was* glad to go there. You wouldn't like me to be always looking for what was nice and pleasant and shirking other things, would you?"

"Dear." She stooped and kissed her. She had been going over some arguments fitted for a child's understanding, and she was afraid of a rather painful time. And the worst to her was the fact that she had come to love the child and really desired her.

"The babies, you know, are so fond of me,

and they are all very good. So I wouldn't have any reason for not staying with them. And it will be only five years more, then I shall be eighteen. And I thought—" flushing daintily, "that maybe Jane might marry, and you would want some one in her place and if it was—me," rather tremulously—"I could come—I love you so. I'd be your Cinderella always. And when I go back it will be like the King's ball—I shall keep thinking how lovely it was for you to bring me here instead of sending me to a hospital, and it will comfort me just as the music did."

Miss Armitage bent over and kissed her but there were tears in her eyes. She was touched with the child's reasoning that was so like heroism.

"Yes, dear," she said. "We will think of it that way. And if you should be ill at any time, I will have you brought here, and you shall stop when you take the babies out and let me see them, and rest a little."

Oh that will be just lovely. You are so good," and she kissed the white hand lying on her shoulder.

Then Jane came in and she had her bath.

How delightful it was to be rubbed so carefully, to have her curly mop brushed.

"I ought to dress myself now. Why I'm not sick at all only I get tired easily, but I am stronger every day."

The breakfast was so nice. And to be waited upon! Marilla gave an inward laugh of delight.

And while Miss Armitage was at church, Dr. Richards came and bundled her up, carried her downstairs and deposited her in the buggy. He was very merry, somehow. He was going out in the country and, oh, how beautiful everything was! There had been a shower in the night and the air was full of fragrance from the grass, the pines and cedars, the orchards, wild flowers, and newly cut hay, that had not all been gathered in. Children ran about or swung in hammocks. Hens were fairly shouting with no regard for Sunday. Birds were caroling all sorts of joyous tunes and the tree twigs were gaily dancing. And here and there such beautiful drifts went over the sky, ships, she called them. They were going to fairy land—something that was not quite heaven, but a lovely place

for all that. There must be so many lovely places in this great world! Over the ocean where Miss Armitage had been, and she recalled the castles and palaces and beautiful woods, and peasants dancing on the green and laughing; that she had seen in the portfolio of engravings. And the legends she had listened to! Oh, if she could go to school and learn ever so many things *now*, for when she was eighteen she would be too old, and a kind of perplexity settled in her smooth forehead.

CHAPTER VII

A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED

Dr. Richards had been studying the changes in the child's face. It was like reading a book, but it had many variations. Her thoughts must have traveled far and wide. What were they?

"Are you very happy?" he asked.

"Happy?" she echoed, wonderingly. "Why it is a beautiful Sunday. One ought to be happy—here with you and watching all these lovely things."

"Are Sundays happier than any other days?"

"Well—" slowly. "They ought to be. It seems as if it was the day of the Sun, and that's always glad and merry."

"But when it rains or is cloudy?"

"Oh, you *know* it is there, and maybe He is fighting away the clouds. And He draws up the water. I read that in a book—and when He gets enough He lets it fall down as He

did last night and that makes the world so fresh and sweet. And there are fifty-two Sundays when you ought not——"

"What?" watching the shadow in her eyes.

"Well, I think you ought not work very much. I suppose some people have to when you have meals to get and babies to see to. I go to Sunday school with Jack and I like it so much. I've learned ever so many of the songs. But the lessons puzzle me. They are about God—we had them in the Home, you know, and God seems so big and strange. Do you know all about him."

"No, child, and no one, not even ministers can know all, so you need not worry about that. God has the whole world in His keeping. Don't you like the week days?"

"Well, they don't seem to have the same joy in them, only at Miss Armitage's every day seems like Sunday. But I keep counting them. You see, I'll be thirteen in September. Then when we've had fifty-two Sundays I'll be fourteen and so on, until I am eighteen."

"And then?" in a sweet kind of tone.

"Why I won't be bound-out any more. It's right for me to stay, *she* said so, but it would

seem such a long while if I was just counting the years. And Sunday comes so quick, most times, and then you can be glad."

What a touch of philosophy for a child!

"But—they are good to you at Bordens?"

"Oh, yes. I *love* Bridget, though I was afraid of her at first. But the grown people have each other and since I don't really belong to them—oh, I can't explain it," and the knot came back to her brow. "You see when you're bound-out and going away for a while they can't feel the same to you. They're never real cross and they don't whip you as they did at the Home, and you have nicer things to eat. Sometimes when you were awful hungry you didn't seem to get enough. You wanted one more piece of bread, but you couldn't have it. Oh, I like it so much better at Mrs. Borden's Only Jack— Are boys always bad?"

"I guess they are for the most part," laughing.

"But he will go to school again. And his father says he will outgrow it. His father truly does want him to be good, and he said I must tell when he pinched me or kicked me,

and he would punish him. But I don't like to, always, for he denies it, and his mother isn't pleased when I do. You can feel when people do not like you to tell things. At the Home when you told tales they whipped the child that was bad, and then they whipped you for telling tales. It didn't seem as if that was quite fair, so I tried never to tell on anyone."

"Generally speaking, it is a bad habit," he commented, gravely.

Then they had reached their destination. A poor old paralyzed man sat in a wheeling chair on the porch. Medical skill could not do much for him, but friendship and interest made pleasant times to remember when the hours were long and weary. Dr. Richards had brought some illustrated magazines, and they talked over the happenings of the week.

A sweet-faced, rather elderly lady brought Marilla a rocking chair, and asked her if she was the doctor's patient. Then she offered her a piece of cake and a lovely pear, and afterward took her down to see the flower garden that was fairly rioting in beauty, and a flock of snowy white chickens, as well as some fine

pigeons that circled around like swallows. She was the wife, and there was a daughter who had gone to church. She talked of Dr. Richards, how good and comforting he was to "father." Marilla thought he must be good to everybody.

"I've had a lovely time with you," the child said. Then she shook hands with "father," who said—

"I s'pose you're the doctor's little girl?" His mind was not always clear on some points. "Come again, won't you?"

She smiled and nodded. "The doctor's little girl," how sweet it sounded! But of course that could not be.

They had a delightful ride home though it was growing warmer. How beautiful her eyes were today—a sort of gray-violet, and the bronze lashes almost curled. And as he listened to her soft, flowing voice, he kept thinking—if he was to marry some one and have a little girl full of quaint ideas as this one was! But it would take a long, long while, and he sighed.

Miss Armitage was sitting by the parlor window when they returned, and she came to the door to meet them.

"I ran away with your little invalid," the doctor exclaimed. "Haven't I brought her back improved?"

Her cheeks were positively rosy and were rounded out by the exquisite shading. She clasped her small arms around Miss Armitage.

"And I've had the most splendid time! A real Sunday. We've been out in the beautiful country where birds were singing hymns and I'm just full of happiness."

They had kept their pact, these two people; they could not have worked together otherwise, and each one was following the same path, for the good of the poor of this world.

"I am very glad——"

"Then you are not going to scold me?" with a questioning smile. "I promised her a drive you know, and today was rather a holiday to me."

"Why, she doesn't scold," cried Marilla in a sort of joyful contradiction.

"Won't you come in and have some dinner with us?"

"Pete would grumble if he stood here an hour. Now, if you would change it to supper—and a cup of tea——"

"Let be a cup of tea, then. I want to talk over some plans."

"Very well. Expect me on the mark. Six, isn't it?"

"Yes," with a smile.

"Oh, I'm just delighted," and Marilla squeezed his hand.

"So you had a lovely time. Where did you go?"

"Oh—through the park and then out on such a beautiful road. Things seem nicer on Sunday, because there isn't so much noise. And there was an old man who has to get about in a chair with little wheels, and can't walk any more. And the lady gave me some cake and such a luscious pear, and asked me to come again. I just wished that there was some little girl from the Home living there."

Marilla had her face and hands washed, and a fresh white frock put on. She was so bright and chatty and really charming. But after dinner she lay in the Morris chair and Miss Armitage read her to sleep. It seemed as if she had improved so much in the twenty-four hours.

They had such a genial and charming

supper, and Miss Armitage played on the organ afterward and then talked about the girls who were going to the Rest House next week. Five of them were very much worn out. They would need to stay a full fortnight.

"And I think one of them needs some medical attention. Come to the Settlement and see her before she starts. And you know I am booked for that Canadian journey with the Winslows. I am almost sorry I promised. Do you think it would be safe to let the child go to the Bordens on Saturday?"

"You won't let her go back! She's is worth something better than baby tending."

"You shouldn't have cured her up so soon! I don't exactly see my way clear or I should keep her for good and all. I like her very much. You may laugh at me about my swans being ordinary geese—but we must admit the Bordens have the right to her at present. And I do not want to make bad friends with them, seeing that in law he may exact the pound of flesh. They may tire of her or she may not be able to stand the babies and Jack. I could leave her here with Jane or send her to the Home. But she is very

much resigned to the return. She has a curious bit of conscience about it. So it is best to let her try again."

"I can't bear the thought of it." He uttered it with vehemence.

"I don't like it much myself. But it seems the only way at present. Bridget will looks out for her. We can't accuse them of any cruelty or neglect."

"And she fairly worships you—fairy god-mother."

"I wish I were. I should change the lot of more than one Cinderella. Well—we will wait and see."

Marilla came in with a bunch of flowers.

"Jane said I might pick them for the doctor, and the ride was so nice. I shall put it in among the splendid things of my life—like the dream, and coming here—and when I get settled in bed and all is dark I can make a real fairy land out of it."

He took her flowers and kissed her, and said "Good-night" to them in a low tone. But he went home racking his brains to see if something could not be done toward keeping her.

Bridget came around one afternoon and was enthusiastic over her improvement.

"They're doing pretty well and I believe the twins are not to get any more teeth in a year or two. And the boss says they've thinned out astonishing, and they can talk a good bit. And that girl's going to the other place and they say you just must come down. But not a foot should you stir if you wasn't real well. An' its glad enough I am to have himself at breakfast at the morn and dinner at night. It's like living again, but I don't want to see any more twins."

Marilla laughed. "Yes, I feel all well only sometimes I have a little catch in my breath; and I'll be ready to go on Saturday."

"An' I'll just be praying to the saints to send you back safe and sound. I don't see why people should be kitin' off to strange places, when they've a good, comfortable house to stay in. But the saints be praised for the rest with that imp of a Jack being away! They do be grown up after awhile an' I s'pose you couldn't have men if there were no boy babies."

Then Mr. Borden called late one afternoon

and brought a note from his wife. Ellen had to leave on Saturday or lose the nice place, and the babies were well now, walking all round and beginning to say cunning words. Pansy called "Illa, Illa," and then looked around for Marilla to come, and said—"Papa bing Illa." They wanted her so much. All their meals were taken over in the next cottage, and the laundress came twice a week for the washings. The children were out of doors most of the time, and they were on the ground floor, so there was no going up and down stairs. Marilla would have it very easy and they would take the best of care of her.

Mr. Borden was both kind and gentlemanly. He hoped there would be some way in which they could repay Miss Armitage for all her care. Would she accept a contribution for the Babies' Hospital, he had heard she was interested in, or any other charity?"

It was very nice of him, Miss Armitage thought, and she chose the hospital. Marilla had been out walking with Jane and when she came in Mr. Borden was so cordial that it won the child's heart, and she was the more

willing to go because she should lose her dear Miss Armitage for a month.

"And afterward, you must come and see me and we will have nice times together, and I may teach you a little music—you learn so easily. Oh, I count on seeing a good deal of you."

The parting was not as bitter as Miss Armitage had feared, partly because Mr. Borden was there and in such good spirits, and Marilla was thinking that the month would soon pass and that in any event she could not see her dear fairy godmother in that time.

The journey interested her very much. She had never taken so long a ride in the cars. Mr. Borden bought her a box of marshmallows and he had some illustrated papers. And there at the station was Miss Florence who gave her a cordial welcome, and the big surrey drove them and three other passengers to their destination. Mrs. Borden ran down the path to meet them.

"I've been on pins and needles lest something should happen," she began. "Why, Marilla, you don't look as if you had ever been ill!

And we're so glad to get you back. Oh, you don't know what an awful time I had, and at first the babies wouldn't let Ellen touch them. Flo or I had to feed them. I'm clear worn out now, but I do hope the babies haven't forgotten you, for I want a little rest. It seemed too bad that you should have given out just then. And I do believe you've grown taller. Why, you are quite a big girl."

The twins sat on a blanket on the grassy space at the side of the house. Mrs. Borden led the girl out to them with a glad sound in her voice.

"Here's your dear Illa come," she said. "Dear Illa that you've wanted so much."

Pansy looked up. Marilla gave one spring and knelt down beside them. It was nice to be longed for, to be remembered. She had really loved them. Her heart was always reaching out for something to love.

"Illa, Illa," almost shouted Pansy and went down head first in Marilla's lap.

"Oh, you darling!"

"I'm glad you didn't get weaned away, Marilla. I was afraid you would, having such a fuss made over you. Mr. Borden said

the house was fine. That Miss Armitage must be rich. Well—she was very good to you and did the best she could for us. But that Ellen didn't like children, that was the long and the short of it, and she has just the place for her, and eighteen dollars a month. Yes, Violet, this is our own Marilla come back to us, and we shall never let her go away again."

Violet had looked rather wary and been chewing on the end of her thumb, but now she nodded and began to hitch toward Marilla.

"Now we're going over to the cottage to dinner. It's such a pleasure to go together. I always take Jack. He has nice table manners if he isn't an angel otherwise. Oh, there he is! Jack, here's Marilla!"

Jack gave a sort of wild howl of delight and started on a run with outstretched arms. Over went Marilla and Pansy and Jack on the top of the heap. Pansy gave a smothered scream.

Mrs. Borden caught Jack by the shoulder and dragged him up. "You bad, bad boy!" she exclaimed, angrily.

"Hello! what's the row?" asked Mr. Borden, advancing to the fray.

Jack rubbed his eyes to make some tears. "Well, you said you was glad to see her an' so was I. An' I was jest gone' to hug her an' the bug fell over, an' I couldn't help it."

Mr. Borden laughed. Mrs. Borden picked up Pansy and comforted her. But she did howl as if she had been half killed.

"Jack, go to Aunt Florence and be made ready for dinner," in a commanding tone. "Oh dear, it does seem——"

"Well things will go better now," said Mr. Borden soothingly. "Marilla, you are going to be the salvation of the household. Did the twins really know her?"

"Pansy did, I think Pansy's really smarter that Violet, I do hope we'll have a little comfort now. There Pansy, dear, go to your sweet Marilla," and she stood the child down. "We must hurry or we will be late for dinner."

Marilla saw the four go over to the cottage, as it was called. She had been tired out with the railroad journey, entertaining as it was, then the excitement of meeting them all again, the bump on her forehead when she had come down so hard on Pansy's head,

and the screams that seemed like a stab going from temple to temple tired her inexpressibly. Then, too, she was hungry. Oh, if she could have a glass of hot milk such as Jane used to bring her! She really could not help crying a little. Both babies stood up by her. Violet pounding on one shoulder, Pansy making a grab at her hair that seemed to pull it out by the roots.

"Pitty, pitty!" she said gleefully.

"Oh, Pansy dear, you hurt. She disentangled the one hand, but the other made the same clutch and was more difficult to manage. Then she rose to her knees that her head might be out of reach. Violet came down heavily and began to cry. Poor Marilla hardly knew what to do.

The babies were much thinner and their faces not so pudgy, but Marilla thought they still resembled the Campbell soup little girl and laughed in spite of her own hurts. Then Violet spied a green apple and made a bee line for it.

"She can't bite it," thought Marilla, and as it kept rolling it amused the baby. Then Pansy crept toward it and there was a rather

funny time. Violet slapped her twin in the face and there was another howl and Marilla went to the rescue. Oh, what should she do? Everything was so strange!

"Bed'y mik, bed'y mik," demanded Pansy, "Bed'y milk."

"Let us go and find some," and she raised the baby to her feet, taking her by the hand. They walked up on the porch, and she placed her in the carriage while she glanced at Violet. Not a moment too soon—the little sharp teeth were making inroads on the apple. She ran and snatched it, throwing it out of sight. There was another howl. Mrs. Borden came hurrying down.

"What is the matter?" rather crossly.

"Violet found an apple and bit in it; I threw it away."

"Oh, that was right Marilla," in a mollified tone. "Where's Pansy?"

"On the porch, in the carriage. I think she's hungry. It sounded as if she meant bread and milk."

"Yes. They have that for their supper. I guess I can start it. I used to feed them

first. Let me see. I guess I can show you—you're so handy unless they've spoiled you."

She had Violet in her arms and said—"Bring in Pansy," leading the way to a room that seemed a general storage place. She lighted the little pyro stove, opened a closet and took out a saucepan, a bottle of milk, a sugar dish and some spoons.

"Now as soon as it gets warm, you fix it—you cannot have forgotten how, and then turn this screw and put the light out. For heaven's sake don't set anything afire! Oh, there's no place like your own home. I haven't had an hour's comfort since I came down here. And my dinner's getting cold. Nice baked veal it was, with dressing. There babies, Marilla will give you some nice bread and milk."

She ran off. The babies whined a little and then watched the proceedings. The stove stood up on a table and she poured out part of the milk. Then she gave the babies a crust of bread to stop their clamoring while she crumbed up some in the saucepan and kept stirring it so that it shouldn't scorch, taking out part, presently. Pansy climbed

up by a chair and began to call "Bed'y mik, bed'y mik."

Marilla put on her bib and began to feed her. Then Violet joined with her starvation cry. First it was one open pink mouth then the other. The viands disappeared as if by magic. She meant to have a little for herself—she was so weak and gone in the stomach, but she found she must make some more, even, for the babies. So she crumbed up the remainder of the loaf. How they *did* eat! She was very tired of ladling it in each little mouth.

She had a very little left for herself, but it seemed to help the desperately tired feeling. She had put the stove out without any mishap. Pansy began to cry—"Wock, wock."

"What is it dear? Was it anything more to eat?" She glanced through the closet.

"Wock, wock," hanging to her skirt.

"Me wock," joined in the chorus that might be Chinese,

Oh, would they never come! She took the babies out on the porch. There was a big rocker. Pansy ran to it and patted it, rolling up her eyes.

"Oh, yes, Rock. I might have guessed, but my head feels so tired and queer." Then she took the cushions and blankets out of the carriage and lifted up Violet, settling her in one side. But Pansy would have none of it. She squirmed down on the floor and began to cry.

"Oh, I don't know what you want!" Marilla almost fell into the chair and jogged it gently. Violet was going to sleep. Poor Cinderalla wiped the tears that would have run down her cheeks. She was so tired. Even the babies crying did not move her. But when she heard the voices she sprang up.

"Oh, what is the matter?" asked Mrs. Borden.

"They wanted to be rocked," explained Marilla and I put them both in the chair, but Pansy wouldn't stay——"

"We have spoiled them. Ellen used to sit in the chair and hold them both. That seemed about the only thing she could do that would please them. And I've held one in the right and Aunt Florence the other until my back ached and I was fit to fall to pieces. We've had the most awful time, Flo and I. But I

remember I had a dreadful time cutting my wisdom teeth, and I was grown. I used to walk the floor at night, they would swell up so. We can't blame the poor babies. And they missed you so. They used to be so good, wasn't they M'rilla; and I suppose they'll be good again. They must be undressed and put to bed. Flo, you look after Violet, and M'rilla you run over and get some dinner. You must be most starved."

Mrs. Borden had picked up Pansy who had now turned to her comforting thumb.

"Oh, run over. You needn't be afraid. Ellen liked the girls first rate. Here, Mr. Borden will escort you."

"I expect you're tired out and homesick," he said sympathetically. "But we will have things better tomorrow. And we are all so glad to have you—this way. Here, Katie, give this little girl a good dinner. She deserves the best you have."

They were clearing the dining room. One long table was piled up with the used dishes. At the other, covered with rather worn enameled cloth, sat two women and one young man. Kate made a place for the child and

brought her a plate with most everything piled on it. Bridget, at home, was so much neater, but then she didn't have so many hungry people to feed. And Jane with her dainty ways!

Oh, she was just a little bound-out nurse girl. She had danced and feasted with the prince; she had been in the palace with the fairy godmother where she was waited on as if she were a little lady. And there had been the Sunday ride with Dr. Richards. Was it *all* dreams?

She could not eat. The food was mostly cold. There was a big lump in her throat and a heaviness in her heart. How long and dreary the five years looked!

"I'm not hungry," and she pushed the plate away.

"But you'll have some pudding and some cream. I told you, Maggie, they'd stuff themselves on that there puddin'! You can beat the band on that."

"I'll just have the cream," the little girl said, timidly.

"Well you won't last long to take care of them there babies if you can't eat better'n

that!" said Katie. "I never see such squabs in my life!"

"Oh, Katie, that won't do. They're 'Kate Greenaway' children. Was she some one who fatted up young ones? Well, she'd better let 'em alone to my thinkin'. And their great round eyes! And the crossest things I ever did see! Mrs. Munson thought she'd have to give up t'other side of the house."

"Be careful," cautioned Maggie, with a slight turn of the head.

Marilla ate her cream, and it really tasted good. Then she rose and said good-night in a quiet fashion.

"Katie, you must remember about little pitchers," cautioned some one.

"Well—that's a nice little girl and I don't believe she'd carry tales. Ellen said she wouldn't take care of those babies for ten dollars a week. And what's this child ever going to do——"

"Mr. Borden is a nice kind of a man and when he's around that Jack behaves like a little gentleman, and the ladies do very well; they're pleasant and don't put on airs. But what they'll do with those twins——"

"Well, they won't always be getting teeth. It's a hard time with babies."

And so they gossiped while they washed dishes and set the kitchen in order for morning. If they had ever been Cinderella they had forgotten about it.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW GLIMPSE OF SERVITUDE

Marilla wandered about a little. The stars were coming out and afar off the wood robin was singing his low sweet song. The dew was scattering the fragrance of flower and shrub and she drew in long breaths of it that seemed to revive her. Was Miss Armitage sitting at the organ and evoking the music that stirred one's very being and made you wish unutterable things? And would Dr. Richards go to comfort some poor patient tomorrow?

Then she went to her new home. Miss Florence sat alone on the porch. The babies were soundly asleep.

"Did you have a nice dinner?" she asked. "And I suppose you are very tired. Will you sit here awhile or would you rather go to bed?"

"Yes, I would like to go to bed," she answered, wearily.

They went through the place they were using for a sort of kitchen and up a narrow stairway. Only part of the room had a fair

ceiling, the rest slanted down to some narrow windows. There was a cot, an old fashioned wash stand and a sort of closet. Their packing trunks were up here.

"Mr. Borden had taken the other part the house first. There is more room and it is rather nicer. But the woman who had taken this wanted so to exchange and made an offer in the rent and they do charge scandalously for these summer places. And when you're not keeping house it doesn't matter so much. It saves lots of trouble. They just give meals over there and they are first rate. I put your clothes that we brought in that closet. It was very nice in Miss Armitage to get you some others and she wouldn't let Mr. Borden pay for them. I want to hear all about her tomorrow. You won't feel afraid, will you?"

"Oh no," was the reply. It didn't seem to matter much what happened to her now.

"Good-night, then, I hope you will sleep well."

"Good-night," steadying her tone.

She thought she wouldn't sleep at all, but her poor little body was so tired out that exhausted nature demanded rest. And she was

awakened in the morning with the singing of some birds, and a beautiful poem floated through her mind. She would not count any Sundays until September came in.

Mrs. Borden called her and she replied, dressing quickly and going down stairs.

"Oh, you look quite rested," said the lady. "I'll give the babies their bath and dress them and then you will give them their breakfast and keep them out on the porch while we go for ours. They take only one nap now, sleeping from eleven until about two. They just have bread and milk. There's a woman here who says I am ruining their health with that, because it makes them fat, but they were fed when they had only milk. Then they have some oatmeal, jelly and a soft boiled egg when they wake up. There's nothing like system; you know just what to do. Now you go over to the kitchen and get a bottle of milk. The babies drink that, too. Then I'll show you how to light up the stove. It's the handiest little thing. I couldn't manage without it."

Marilla had a pleasant greeting from Katie who declared, "she looked ten per cent

better and hoped she would have a good appetite for her breakfast as she didn't eat enough to keep a bird alive last night."

The babies were pretty good natured, as well.

"You know they always were real sweet," said their mother, "and so easily amused. I hope you haven't forgotten your knack of story telling; and how they used to laugh! That Ellen was the stupidest thing."

While she was feeding the babies, the grown folks went over to their breakfast. The kitchen and the servants' table was in much better order, and there were some delightful muffins and fresh fish and muskmelons. The babies played about; Jack's father took him out for a walk, then there was a long quiet time at the luncheon hour, and the babies were fed again.

"I succeeded in getting a two-seat carriage, so we will all go out this afternoon," said Mr. Borden. "They say Braun is a queer Hungarian settlement and on Sunday the people are all out in their best. We'll take a look at it."

"*Can* we all go?"

"Why Florence said she wouldn't mind

caring for one baby, and Marilla can take the other."

The two nurses had the back seat, Florence made Marilla put her baby between them on the seat. "We'll change off when I get tired of holding mine," she said.

They went straight over to the Sound—the upper end of the great South Bay. Oh how splendid it was! Marilla almost held her breath with surprise, then they drove up the road a short distance, but she hated to leave the glorious views. Pansy dropped in her lap and went to sleep. As they turned they passed through one of the magnificent residential settlements, then to the odd Hungarian town where a foreign Sunday was in full life and vivacity.

Little tables were standing around, some filled with families, some having a couple of lovers; other parties were walking up and down; all in picturseque holiday attire. The tables were set out with small, hard brown cakes, slices of bread that each had brought to the feast. There was beer of course, merrymaking and jollity—but no one seemed to overstep the bounds. Children ran around, grotesque

copies of their elders. Rows of cottages and gardens, great corn and hayfields, stubble where cattle were browsing, enclosures of fattening pigs whose squealing had a mirthful sound.

"It is well worth looking at," said Mr. Borden. "A bit of Europe on one of our islands and really a lesson to our own thriftless poor."

Violet chattered in a funny fashion, but Pansy slept through it all. Marilla tried several times to shift her position, but the little form was too heavy to stir. Yet it was delightful, though she kept thinking of last Sunday and Dr. Richards.

Mr. Borden stopped at the gate and helped them out.

"Lift Pansy, she's asleep," said Aunt Florence.

"Oh, Marilla, why didn't you keep her awake! I've been trying not to let them sleep in the afternoon so they would go to bed the earlier."

"Just as you get a baby in good habits, someone comes along and spoils it all," exclaimed Mrs. Borden in a vexed tone. She was a little tired, having answered at least fifty questions for Jack.

But Pansy woke when her father stood her down, and said, rather drowsily— "Nice horsey;" and sat squarely down in the path. Aunt Florence picked her up and led her to the porch.

"Now, Marilla, get their suppers ready and feed them. And put away their things. I can't bear to see them lying round on chairs."

Mr. Borden drove off, taking Jack.

"Ont bedy-milk," announced Violet.

"Yes, yes; go to Marilla."

The child had laid the caps in the drawer and hung up the coats. Both children came out and clamored for supper and pulled on her skirt until they almost tipped her over.

Then the great bell clanged for the boarders' supper. They had dinner at noon on Sundays. Mr. Borden returned and escorted the ladies over. This was always a rather chatty, long-drawn-out meal.

Marilla fed the babies, washed and put away her few dishes, then took the children out on the porch. Violet wanted to be "wocked," so she sat beside her in the big porch chair. Pansy ran up and down uttering queer unmusical noises. The piano in the

other part of the house was accompanying a singer.

The mistress of that part leaned out of the window and said in a sharp tone—"Can't you keep that child still? She's an awful nuisance."

"Let us go indoors," said Marilla. "Come, and I'll tell you a story about a bunny that got lost away from all his folks."

But Pansy had no mind to come. She screamed when Marilla took hold of her arm and then kicked, jerking away, she rolled down the three steps, landing on the grass. Marilla, frightened, picked her up in her arms and ran through the hall with her. The suddenness had really taken the breath out of the little body for a moment, then she looked rather wildly at her rescuer.

"It didn't hurt you much and you were a naughty baby to run away! Don't cry any more and you shall have——" she cast about to see what solace there was—"oh, you shall have some sugar—see—" and she offered her some in a spoon.

Pansy laughed and reached out for the sugar, quite restored to good humor.

"Now, I'll go out and get sister and you shall have some more sugar."

Violet came in quite willingly. She sat on the floor with them and thought of the stories she used to tell. This one was about a runaway squirrel. It grew dark and he was afraid, for he heard a queer noise that kept saying, "Who—who," so he ran another way. Then a dog barked, and Marilla made the sound of a dog and both babies laughed delightedly. "So he ran as fast as he could but the dog ran, too, and the squirrel climbed up in a tree," and Marilla climbed with her hands on the back of the chair in a funny fashion. " 'Come down,' said the dog. 'I won't,' said the squirrel. 'Then I'll climb up and eat you.' But the squirrel laughed and said: 'You can't climb a tree.' "

The babies laughed, too, but Violet wanted to be "wocked" again. She really was sleepy. So Marilla put them both in the rocking chair and began another story about a bird who had three little babies in a nest and had to go out and get them something to eat. The ladies came back and Violet began to nod and let her eyes droop.

"They must go to bed," said their mother.

It was supposed that Pansy would make a protest. She slipped down out of the chair and held out her fat little hand, murmuring—"Illa, Illa."

"Well, Illa shall put you to bed, come Violet."

Mrs Borden found their nighties. "Me too," and Violet took hers over to Marilla.

"Now, isn't that cunning? Marilla they are getting back all their old love for you! But it is time I had a little rest."

The babies were safely deposited in their crib, each with a thumb in her mouth, a rather recent habit. Then they went out on the porch again. Jack was there with his chum, Stevie. The ladies joined the procession up and down the board walk. Stevie was recounting some wonderful experience, so Marilla dropped into a chair and her mind went back to last Sunday night. How long ago it seemed!

Stevie was summoned home by his nurse. Quite a party went to the kind of sacred concert. Jack crawled up beside Marilla, for he was getting sleepy. When she proposed

he should go to bed he turned obstinate and held on tight to the arm of the chair.

"I won't go to bed. I'm going to stay here until mama comes."

"Oh, you must. The clocks have struck eight."

"But I'm not going to." He caught the arm of the chair. "You try now and I'll kick you with my hind leg."

She knew well enough that he would kick. Somehow she did not feel equal to the struggle.

"Tell me a story," was his next demand. "About somebody being put in the pit. Sunday school teacher told it. Why, I'd climb out."

So she told him the story and then another, rocking slowly, and as the demand ceased she knew he was asleep. But she did not dare try to get him to bed. So she went to her own thoughts, the last week passed with the fairy godmother and Dr. Richards.

It was ten when the family returned.

"Oh, Marilla, how *could* you let him go to sleep! He's so cross when you wake him up."

"I couldn't get him to go——"

"Jack!" His father picked him up and carried him to the sleeping room.

"Now you run to bed," said the mistress, still sharply.

It was very well, Marilla thought, that Jack had a companion who was not fond of "kids." Stevie lived quite a distance below and had brought no end of playthings, had an auto wagon that two could sit in, though only one could be chauffeur. So Marilla had the babies out on the side lawn all the morning in the shade, and after their nap took them out in the carriage. They were quite fond of walking, too. They really were rather amiable again.

"Miss Florence, could I have some paper and a pencil?" she asked during their noontide nap. "I promised to write to Dr. Richards and tell him if I kept well."

"Why not to Miss Armitage?" was the inquiry.

"She was going to Canada, and—I'm quite well again, and the babies are so much better. He will be glad to hear, for he felt very sorry about them, and he said I must write."

"I suppose Miss Armitage's house is very grand, much finer than ours?"

"It's beautiful and she has such a lovely organ. Well, it's different and there are two big parlors and some curious things that I never saw before and chairs in beautiful light blue, all flowered, and some tall vases and marble statues. And there's Jane and Norah—and the wash goes out. Yes, I suppose she's rich."

"And you'd like to live there?"

"Perhaps she wouldn't want me," the child said simply.

Evidently there had been no talk about it.

Miss Borden gave her pencil and paper.

Marilla went to the kitchen nursery, sat down on a stool and put her paper on the bottom of the wooden chair. She began—"Dear Dr. Richards." Oh, there was so much to say! She was well and the babies were improved and could talk a good deal and looked better for not being so fat. She really liked home better and Bridget's kitchen was so clean, and there was always a nice white cloth on the table. It seemed a funny way to live but many of the people did not have

meals in their own houses, but went over to the eating place. "I can't spell the other word," she admitted naively. There were so many pretty girls in lovely frocks who walked up and down and didn't have to take care of babies. "I don't believe I am as fond of babies as I used to be. I get tired of having them every day," she explained frankly. "And soon I shall begin to count on the five years."

She filled up the whole sheet, folded, slipped it in the envelope and fastened it. Oh, she must ask for a stamp. She could run down to the postoffice.

Miss Borden was curious to know what was in the letter, whether Marilla had found any fault with her surroundings, but the eager, honest face disarmed curiosity that could not be easily gratified. So the letter went its way.

There were many things to entertain a child whose former life had been narrow. Some of the girls spoke to her. "Were the babies her sisters?"

"Oh, no. She was—well their nurse."

"How odd they looked! Is that little Jack their brother?"

"Yes." Oh how ardently she wished they were pretty.

"He looks more like you than like them. You've both got such pretty curly hair, though his is darker. I think curly hair's just lovely. I wish mine curled, and you've such a pretty dimple in your chin."

Marilla blushed at the praise.

"What are the babies called?"

Marilla repeated their names.

"That's funny—they're so much alike."

"Well—they're twins," said another.

Then the babies thought it was time they joined in the conversation, and a funny mess they made of it. Pansy said—

"Ont to dit down."

"No, you can't," answered Marilla. "Their mother said I must never take them out."

They happened to be strapped in very securely. But Pansy made a great fuss and gesticulated furiously with her little fists.

"I had better go on," said Marilla.

"It's awfully funny. Does she often get in such a tantrum?"

"Not very often," returned Marilla half ashamed and almost afraid the baby would break the strap.

After a few days she began to get quite acquainted with some of the girls. They came from various places and were quite ready to talk about themselves. There was to be a lawn party next week at the Sheldon's, just for the girls, and they were going to dance."

"Oh, did you ever go to a ball?" asked Marilla.

"Why, girls don't go to balls! They are for the big folks. My grown up sister does and they're just splendid."

She had half a mind to tell them about the beautiful dream and how she had danced with the Prince. But Pansy was going on at such a rate that she pushed the carriage along and by the time they reached home she had forgotten her trouble.

And there was a letter from Dr. Richards.

She wanted to kiss it, she was so glad, but Mrs. Borden stood there, so she simply said—"Thank you," and opened it.

It was quite to a child's capacity. Marilla smiled in some places, looked sad in others. The little boy who had been so dreadfully injured by an automobile had died, but he would have been a terrible cripple if he had

lived. There had been two very hot weeks and the poor babies had suffered. He was very glad to hear that the twins were doing so nicely, and had all their teeth safe and sound. And was she growing stronger, and did she have a chance to take the baths he advised? Miss Armitage was having a fine time. And a friend was to take them in his yacht around the islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and come down to Nova Scotia, so she wouldn't be home as soon as they expected. And he was so busy he couldn't have any vacation at all; but then he had taken years before and must be satisfied.

There were bits of fun and queer sayings interspersed that made a sort of jolliness in her face.

"Don't you want to read it?" she asked, rather timidly.

"Mrs. Borden just did. She and Florence had wondered whether Marilla had made any invidious comparisons about the change to actual service instead of being treated as a guest in a fine house.

"If—you'd like me to," with the proper hesitation.

"Oh, yes. And I used to tell him about the babies, that they were so good and hardly ever cried, and how I told them stories and they laughed just as if they understood—didn't they?"

"You *made* them understand. You're an odd little girl, Marilla, and I don't know what we would do without you, but then you do really belong to us. I do suppose the baths would be a good thing if you were not afraid. Now, we can't coax Jack to go in the water, though he delights to run along the edge barefooted. That's fun for the children. But you see if we all went some one must look after the children. Then there's the time for their nap and there'd be no one to go with you. There seems so many things to do in the afternoon now that we have joined the Clubs. And there's teas and things——"

"Yes," Marilla returned, meekly.

"Why wouldn't you go in the water?" she asked Jack a few days afterward.

"'Cause there's sharks. Stevie said so. An' they eat up people."

"Why don't they eat up—well, they haven't eaten up any one yet. We should have heard of it."

"They only eat up children. The big folks kick 'em out of the way. But you've got to be real strong an' have a big foot. You just give it to 'em by the side of the jaw and they flop down in the water. That big Jimmy Lane has seen them lots of times."

There was a great sand heap where the smaller children went to play and tumble about and build forts and ovens and sometimes sand each other. Marilla took the babies out in the carriage after they had their dinner and were dressed afresh. Sometimes she met the girls sauntering about, sometimes with the nurse maids. The two ladies went to a Whist Club, and one afternoon played Bridge, and between times they met on each others' porches.

The afternoon of the children's lawn party the street was fairly thronged. There were grown people within the enclosure by special invitation. And how pretty the young people were in their beautiful summer attire with laces and ribbons and bead chains and white ties with a great bow almost as big as the foot.

There were four pieces of music. Oh, the dancing was just bewitching? Marilla drew

long breaths and wished she was among them; every pulse in her body kept time. The trees waved and nodded, some birds sang and there were sounds of happy laughter.

"Get away from here with this big caboose of yourn!" said a rough voice, "you take up too much room," and he wheeled the carriage around so suddenly the babies almost toppled over. "Other people want a chance. Get along, I say!"

She had no choice but to go on.

"I'm glad he sent off that nurse girl," exclaimed a woman with two children clinging to her skirts. "Those great wagons are such a nuisance!"

Marilla crossed the street and went slowly up and down. When the throng moved about a little she could see the white fairy figures floating over the greensward, and hear the music that set one's nerves a-tingle. The outside crowd began to disperse, but the man loitered about, so she did not dare go back.

Then they brought out some tables on the lawn and began to arrange them. Oh, how daintily pretty it was! She recognized some

of the girls, and in spite of her courage, sighed as she turned away.

Those were the sisters for whom the coach and four waited, with the footman and outriders, and who would be made welcome at all the grand functions of life, while the Cinderellas were relegated to the chimney corner. And the godmother must come out of fairy land, if she came at all, and transformed one with a wand. That was why the glories were so unsubstantial, and why the dream must end at midnight.

The babies were clamoring for supper. The house was all alone. She lifted them out and helped them up the steps, then gave them each a biscuit while she prepared their bread and milk. The ladies came home from their Whist. Mrs. Borden had won the first prize and they were talking as eagerly as boys over a baseball score. There was Jack, dirty and tousled as any tramp.

"Wash him up Marilla and put him in some clean clothes or we'll be late for dinner. Come, be quick, child."

That was the portion of the Cinderellas.

CHAPTER IX

THE LITTLE THORNS

They were all very glad to be home again. The house was so clean and orderly and there were so many closets and drawers in which to pack away things. Bridget had scoured and scrubbed and polished windows largely to pass away time, for the people next door had been away as well and the maids on a vacation earning money at seasides.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you again!"

Marilla was hugging Bridget and her tone was full of delight.

"Ah, dear, an' it's glad enough I am to get ye back, but you've not grown very fat an' rugged looking, but them babies do beat all! They're quite ginteel one may say, an how they do run and talk! You'll have your hands full, I'm thinkin', if they're goin' to copy Jack!"

"Oh, Bridget, they're real sweet, only they're noisy when your head's tired. It sounds worse indoors. There was a big out of doors and grass, and people passing and

some children came in to play. But now you have to look after them all the time."

"Marilla! Marilla!"

No, she could not waste her time in the chimney corner.

"Put on the babies' things and take them out walking, they'll drive me crazy."

She walked them round to Loraine place. Would she dare call? Oh, how her heart yearned to see them all again! but the blinds were drawn; perhaps no one was at home.

Then as they were going down the street, just at the corner, a lady and two girls about her size crossed. The lady and one of them lived about a block further down Arch street. The other she had known at the seaside. She smiled with a sudden pleasant surprise. The girl simply stared. Marilla's face was scarlet. Was it possible she was not to know any of these girls if she should meet them? This one did not live here, she knew that.

Then Aunt Hetty came home looking thinner and more dried up than ever, but glad to get back to her room. She would not come down to dinner but M'rilla could bring her up some toast and tea.

So instead of having a cozy time with Bridget she carried the small waiter up stairs. The tea was in the pot; Aunt Hetty had the kettle boiling on the gas stove. The toast was on a hot plate.

"Sit down a minute, I've hardly seen you. Did you have a nice time? I suppose the twins will be on the everlasting trot, now they can walk so well, and as for talking—well I'm glad I don't have to live with them; that I'm clear this end of the house. You see that they don't come up stairs. It's nice to be in your own place, though the folks where I staid were very good and pleasant, I s'pose they thought I might remember them in my will," and she gave a shrill sort of cackle. "Now I tell you there isn't much fun in living to be old, and I seem to have lost my spunk. It's just a kind of drowsing life away. Now tell me what you did! My, but this toast tastes good! Better than all their flummery."

"Oh, there were a good many nice things and pretty houses and gay people, and a big place where they all went to meals. And Jack is better than he used to be, he had the nicest little playmate and was out of the house most

of the time. But I must run down, for Bridget said my dinner was ready. I'll come up again when the babies are in bed; can I bring you anything?"

"Well, yes, a glass of hot milk. No, bring it in a cup with a handle—it is so much nicer to hold. You're a good willing girl, Marilla."

"I thought you never would get down," Bridget said, almost crossly. "If you have to wait on that old woman and all the rest of us you'll wish you were in the grave. My! You look all tired out. Now, here's a nice bit of chicken that I laid aside for you. I'm not goin' to have you fed on leavings. And it wasn't nice down there?" nodding her head.

"Oh, Bridget, such a kitchen and such a table, and no white cloth on it! They, the servants didn't seem to care, and they were nice and clean at the Home, and you're—well, you have things as nice as in the dining room, and to have things shoveled out of the kettle on your plate or cold on a dish! Sometimes puddings were good, and the creams and frozen things were clean and nice. But I'm so glad to get back to you. And the lovely bath room! We didn't have any in the cottage.

Why it saves half the work taking care of babies."

"You bet it does, I couldn't and wouldn't live in such a muxy kitchen. If I couldn't have things to suit I'd take French leave, though I guess I'd call it Irish leave. And people, women, think it a fine thing to go off and live that way. But the boss got very tired of it."

Marilla laughed faintly. She was almost too tired to eat, but the chicken was so tasty, and the fresh home-made bread delightful. And the cheery voice put heart in the girl. Then the dessert was delicious.

"I promised to take Aunt Hetty a cup of milk. I'll see first if Mrs. Borden wants me. But I'll dry the dishes for you."

No, dear, I did the most of them while you were up stairs."

The babies had been put to bed. They did have an unlimited capacity for sleep, now that they were well. Jack was perched on his father's knee detailing some wonderful adventures. No, they did not need her.

"I'm going in next door awhile," said Bridget on her return. Mrs. Dawson's girl

left in a huff, and she asked me if I knew anyone. And there was my friend, Maggie Brady, just out of a place and a nice tidy girl; a good cook, too. So they both suited. Maggie's mother and mine lived in the same town. It's nice to have a friend at hand. And when ye's through with the old lady I'd run to bed. You look tired as a wagon wheel that's run round and round."

Marilla laughed and took a bottle of milk with her. Aunt Hetty drank a good cupful, hot, and the remainder was set out on the window sill. Then she settled herself in bed with two pillows under her head; she could hear better she thought.

"Now, you open that book at the mark and read to me. 'Twon't be very interesting, for you can't know what's gone before. And no doubt I'll fall asleep—I always snore a little at first, and when you hear that you may light the burner in the other room and turn it very low and put the window down from the top and skip off to yourself."

She was very tired but she read quite awhile before the gentle snoring began, and she was glad enough to go to bed.

They had been home just a week when school opened. It was a comfort to get rid of Jack. They began to settle into quite regular living.

"I've just had a fright," said Mrs. Borden, coming up to her sister's room. "A man has been here inquiring about school children and I *did* stretch the truth a little. You see, now children have to go to school until they are fourteen. I simply can't let Marilla go. I didn't adopt her nor consider her in any sense my own. A child like that isn't worth more than her board and clothes. What good would she be to us if we had to get her off at nine in the morning, and then have only an hour in the afternoon. The twins *must* be taken out, and there's so much running up and down. She's a nice honest, truthful child and a born nurse girl. But if I had to send her to school, I'd trot her off to the Home."

"There is so much to do this winter. When you come to that, she knows enough for ordinary, and later on she could go to evening school. There's so much shopping and planning, and we must be out a good deal. The twins mightn't take to a new girl. Let us keep her if we possibly can."

"Miss Borden's lover was to return before Christmas and wanted every thing ready for a speedy marriage. It would be in church with a very small reception afterward. And that was hardly three months' distance.

Marilla was coming home with the babies one afternoon when two lady callers and a girl were saying adieu and coming down the steps. Yes, that was Ada Brant who had been at Bayside in the summer and at first had been quite friendly with her. Now she looked as if she had never known her.

Maybe that was the way all the girls would feel to one who had been bound-out from an institution. There they had all been on an equality. And somehow the Bordens had not really put her down. Then that lovely Miss Armitage. Why, there had been a place for her at the table, and Jane had waited on her as if she had been a guest!

Perhaps it would be different now. Then came a very bitter knowledge to Marilla Bond. Five years more of this, and wouldn't people remember she had been Mrs. Borden's nursemaid? Why, even now she would be glad to be Miss Armitage's maid. What made the difference?

She was to hear more of it that evening. After the babies came in from their outing they were washed, undressed, and a nice warm wrapper put over their nightgown, and then fed. Afterward laid in their crib. They didn't go to sleep at once but kicked and laughed and chatted in a regular frolic. Phlegmatic babies can be easily trained. Then Marilla came down and waited on the table as Bridget sent various things up on the lift. She was a really charming little waitress.

"Such an odd thing occurred today," began Mrs. Borden. "John do you know a firm, Davis & Calthorpe, who manufacture something—"

"Yes, Calthorpe is selling out, I drew up some papers for him. He's been up in the Adirondacks all summer and is going to Bermuda; but he will never come back alive."

"How queer it all is! We met Mrs. Brant a few times at Bayside. They have come to Newton to look into the business and are staying with Mrs. Wheeler. They came to call and Mrs. Brant has a pretty, stylish young daughter. Of course they'll have to move here. She is quite taken with Newton. I told them

about that Jamreth house down the street and they decided to look at it. Of course I didn't get much acquainted with her, but she seems a very nice body." And that's a promising business, but Calthorpe had to give it up and I'm sorry for the poor fellow; glad, too, that he met with this chance of disposing of his share. Brant appears to be a nice, brisk fellow and it is lucky for Davis as well."

The Jamreth house had stood empty all summer. Marilla passed it on her way to the park, for Arch street led direct. Suppose Ada was there sitting on the stoop or at the window and giving her that indifferent stare when they had been quite acquaintances!

For the first time fairy land and her dancing with the Prince failed to comfort. The whole world seemed changed, and how would Miss Armitage be, now that she was well?

But she was very, very busy; Jack went to school a week and was delighted with the boys.

"Sam Gordon has a little brother just big enough to begin school. I wish one of the twins was a boy. What's the use of so many girls?"

His father laughed a little at that. The second week the charm began to fail. His head ached and he wanted to stay at home and have Marilla read to him.

"Boys don't have headaches," said his mother. But he was cross and his face flushed up so that in the afternoon his teacher sent him home. "And I don't want this scratchy flannel on! I like the other better; can't I pull it off?"

"The others are worn out, and it is coming cooler weather. Oh, you'll get used to it," said his mother, teasingly.

Then he kicked the babies' playthings about and pinched Marilla's arm and wouldn't eat any dinner, and said his pudding was bitter. His father sent him to bed, but he tossed and tumbled and cried out for a drink ever so many times, and in the morning was red with a fever and some sort of eruption. So they sent for Dr. Baker, who pronounced it a fine case of measles.

"I don't see where he caught it, unless it is in the school, and I suppose the twins will have it," said Mrs. Borden in despair.

There were three pretty bad days and Jack

tried the patience of the whole household sorely. Then the babies showed symptoms and seemed vexed that such a thing should happen to them, and now school was not to be thought of in some time.

"Run out and take a little airing, Marilla," said Mrs. Borden, late one afternoon. "You haven't been out of the house for days."

She was very glad to go. Jack was still a recluse though he seemed well.

Which way should she go? Her heart cried softly for Loraine place and almost unconsciously her feet turned thitherward. Miss Armitage sat by the window but she sprang up and opened the hall door with, "My dear, dear child!"

Marilla had her face in a transport of happy crying, from an overweighted heart.

"Oh, my dear!" leading her in.

"Oh, Miss Armitage, we have the measles round at our house. Perhaps I oughtn't come in."

"Oh, I had the measles long ago, and I've seen three cases this afternoon. I've only been home four days and had the most splendid time. But I want to hear about you—have

you been well, and was it nice at the seaside? Why it seems like a year since we parted."

"Yes, I was well and the babies walk and talk and are real cunning and they do grow prettier. They're getting some real nice hair but I can't make it curl. I didn't like the house so well and there was no bath only a cold water faucet and a gas stove, and I missed Bridget so much. We staid out of doors most of the time. I didn't go in bathing—I was a little afraid, I think, and I would have had to go with some of the servants. There were a good many of them—we took our meals outside. I was glad to get home, and oh, so glad to see you!"

She caught the hand and kissed it rapturously. Miss Armitage held up the face with her hand under the chin.

"No, you haven't gained any."

"I think I did at first, but Jack was so troublesome, and the old lady, Aunt Hetty, wants one to read her to sleep and sometimes it takes so long."

"You surely are not helping with her?"

Oh, only reading and answering her bell. She's somehow so nice when you wait on her.

I think, like the rest of us, she's so glad to be back. One day she gave me a dollar and said I must spend it for candy, but I haven't yet. Do you think I ought to have told Mrs. Borden?"

"Why, not necessarily."

"I'm not so very fond of candy. There's a beautiful book of fairy stories in a store down town that I'd like. Only Jack takes every thing, and he keeps asking if I haven't a penny when we go out. His mother doesn't give him pennies to spend, and a very good thing, too."

"What kind of books do you read to the old lady?"

"Well, you see it's this way, she reads on pages and pages and puts in a mark, then I go on where she left off and so I don't get the real sense of the story. They seem to have a good deal of trouble. I'd rather read about little girls who went to their grandmother's and had nice times, and beautiful verses full of music such as you used to read."

Miss Armitage laughed pleasantly. "We'll have some nice reading again. And you ought to go to school."

"But you see I can't. I look over Jack's books and I write on pieces of paper. I don't know how to spell all the words. Oh, I wrote a letter to Dr. Richards. He asked me to, and he sent such a nice answer. I did want to write again, but I hadn't any paper nor postage stamp, and I didn't like to ask the second time. Oh, I might buy some with my dollar, mightn't I?"

"I'll do you up a little package. He wants to see you, so I'll ask him to come here and let you know. And sometimes when you are out with the babies you must stop here and let me see them, and I'll call and see you all."

"Oh, how nice that will be. I'm so glad you love me. For I never shall be like the girls who have pretty homes and parents to love them. But you'll be the fairy godmother always, won't you?"

"Yes, dear," in a soft tone.

"And now I must go. It's so sweet to know that some one really loves you even if you are a bound-out girl. And now I'm beginning to count the years."

Miss Armitage kissed her and watched her tripping down the steps. She was worthy of a

better fate. Would she love the hand that set her in pleasanter places and not come to think wholly of self? For she, woman past thirty, as she was, longed for a little daughter's love, a daughter to grow up along side of her, to share her very life.

The babies went out walking up and down the block one day and took no harm. Violet was wild to run away, as Jack had been, and so was quite a care. Then the men came to fumigate the house and they all went to a friend's and took lunch.

"Dear me, what a nice little maid you have," said the friend. "She seems to know just what to do, and she's so pleasant tempered. Where did you find her?"

"She came from Bethany Home and she's bound to me until she's eighteen. She'll be of good service."

The Autumn was glorious with a good deal of sunshine; Jack went back to school and was getting to be a regular boy, full of pranks; they were sometimes rather rough. He did stand in awe of his father, but he occasionally said things to Marilla that were not a bit nice, then he would coax her not to tell of them.

One afternoon Miss Armitage came. Bridget said she was sorry the ladies were out but the visitor said she wanted to see Marilla and the babies and went up stairs to the nursery. Playthings were all about; Marilla had been building houses for the twins to knock down. They glanced at Miss Armitage with wondering eyes, but they said "down, down" when Marilla took to a chair. Then they tumbled over her and buried their hands in her curly hair, even if it pulled. They showed they owned her, and it really was not an easy lot for the little girl. She did look pale and tired but she was so glad to see her friend.

Then the lady began to plan if there was any way to get her free. She went to see Mrs. Johnson.

"Why the child seems very well off," was the rather tart reply. "She is well fed and clothed and has nothing to do but amuse two little ones. Many a girl would jump at the place. It wouldn't do for us to be changing them about, you see. We do sometimes take away a child who is ill treated. I've visited this Mrs. Borden several times and found things very satisfactory."

"But she could be educated—"

"My dear lady, there are hundreds of these poor children who need a good home and to be fitted for their station in life which cannot be a very high one. Their heads must not be filled with dreams of wonderful fortunes. Real work is and must be the lot of those who are homeless and dependent. Now, if *you* wanted to adopt some child I have two lovely little girls here, one of them born to luxury it would seem, but misfortune and death made a waif of her. I do hope some well-to-do people will take a fancy to her."

No, she didn't want any stranger. She would wait and see. Why should she care so much for Marilla? The faint little voice haunted her—"Are you a fairy godmother?"

The Bordens were really disappointed when they found they had missed Miss Armitage. Then a dressmaker was to come, and friends were dropping in. Unless they shut the nursery door the little girls were in everything, and then they fairly howled for mama.

"Oh, Marilla, can't you keep those children entertained? It sounds as if they were getting murdered. Put on their things and take them out."

Then one night Pansy had the croup and there was a great scare.

"You've let her get cold some way, Marilla; you mustn't let the wagon stand while you keep looking at books and pictures in store windows. You better go straight over to the park, and don't talk to other girls. You're old enough now to have a little judgment."

Marilla made the babies ready. They were very fond of walking up and down stairs. Now she lifted them in the carriage, tucked them in with the pretty robe and they did look picturesque in their fluffy white hoods and fur cloaks. They uttered shrieks of delight as they went along. The Brant's were moving in the Jamreth house; she would remember hereafter to turn off at State street and not pass it. Somehow she felt very tired. At times there was such a fluttering somewhere inside of her that for a moment things went round and she had to gasp for breath. She would like to tell Dr. Richards about it. She had seen him twice, both times in the street and it had kept her happy for days.

CHAPTER X

ON THE BORDER OF TRAGEDY

For two days Jack had been out of school with a sore throat. Today it was better. The ladies wanted to go out to match some trimming and view some elegant new party frocks that might do for a wedding gown.

"Now don't tear the house down while we are gone. And if you are good Jack, I'll bring you home that new top you wanted. Remember the noise disturbs Aunt Hetty."

But the children enjoyed the noise. Aunt Hetty's bell rang.

"Oh, Marilla, can't you keep those children in a little better order," said the fretful voice. "And get me a drink of cold tea, I feel so queer."

"I'm so sorry," answered the child, "I'll try my best. If only Jack wasn't home."

Jack was throwing the ball at the babies who made vague efforts to catch it.

"I'm so afraid you'll hurt them."

"Oh, you old fraid cat! You can't let a

fellow have any fun! I'll give it to you."

It was not a heavy ball but he sent it with all his angry might. It struck against her heart and she went down in a little heap.

"I fixed you that time! Come, you can't play possum over me, get up!"

He touched her with his foot. Pansy ran and fell over her.

"Get up, you little clumsy skunk! You'll half kill her!"

"Poor Illa. Det up, Illa. Did bad Jack hurt 'ou?"

Jack turned her partly over. Her face was ghastly, with the eyes rolled up.

Aunt Hetty's bell rang. Jack ran down stairs.

"O, come up Bridget, Marilla's killed!"

"Ah, now you want to frighten a body out of her wits! You ought to be skinned alive."

Oh, come quick!" Jack began to cry.

Bridget walked up stairs very deliberately, "Oh, Holy Mother of God! Get up, children. Marilla, dear—Oh, what have you done to her?"

She took the limp figure in her arms.

"Oh, me darlint! Wurra! wurra! And

that bell! As if no one wanted anything but that old body with one foot in the grave. Jack run in next door and ask Mrs. Seymour to come at once; quick, or I'll bat you with a stick."

Then she went up stairs. The poor old body was lying in the reclining chair, her face distraught with fright.

"Send for the doctor at once, something has happened to me, I can't stir. My legs are heavy as lead. Where's Marilla? I've rung and rung!"

Marilla's fainted dead away. Yes, I'll get the doctor," and down Bridget flew to open the front door.

"Oh for the love of heaven, will you come and talk to that thing in the wall an' get the doctor! Why, I'm most crazy."

"Yes, what doctor?" Mrs. Seymour went to the telephone.

"Doctor Baker, and then to Miss Armitage in Loraine place."

"Dr. Baker would come at once."

They found the lady's number. She was just going out but would stop there first.

Then she took Mrs. Seymour through to the

nursery. The children were patting and petting Marilla.

"Get away, children, you've had her smothered."

"Does she faint often? She seems so well and merry."

"She did that time last summer. She was out with the babies and fell off of a stoop, I believe, an' she kept looking like a ghost for ever so long. That Miss Armitage took her to her house an' took care of her. She's a good woman, that she is. An' it's just my belief that Marilla isn't strong enough for the rough an' tumble of life. Some ain't you know, an' she's tugged these fat babies about often; there isn't but one nurse kept."

"Oh, they were too heavy for her to lift."

"Mrs. Borden didn't want her to, much. I'll say that for her. She was afraid the babies backs might get out of shape some way by a bad fall. She's a fair dealin' woman or I wouldn't have staid with her all these years. But Marilla isn't strong enough for the work, and the old Aunt wants a good deal of waiting on. It's run up an' down until you'd think her legs would just fall out.

Mrs. Seymour had been trying various restoratives. Now Marilla gave a long shuddering sigh, opened her eyes but closed them again.

"What beautiful long lashes she has! And such silky hair—"

"Oh, the saints be praised! I began to think she was dead! Poor darlint! 'Rilla dear—its Bridget who'd do anything in the world for you."

Dr. Baker arrived. He entered the room, looked at Marilla, felt of her pulse, and listened to the faint heart beats. "Give her a little brandy," he said. "Where's Mrs. Borden? I thought the old lady—"

"Oh, she is!" interrupted Bridget, "she can't stir her legs one bit. She's rale poorly, now I tell you, an' this child's been looking after her as well as the babies."

"That's twice too much." He ran lightly up the stairs to meet with a torrent of upbraidings.

"I thought I'd have to die here all alone! Where's Marilla? I've rung and rung."

"The girl has been in a dead faint. She's worn out. And you must have a regular nurse."

"Oh, dear!" Aunt Hetty began to cry, "couldn't I have her? 'Twouldn't be as bad as them two young ones. And I'd pay her well, too. She's so nice and good tempered with her face full of smiles and sunshine. Oh, if she's going to be ill what shall we all do?"

The brandy revived Marilla a little. She tried to speak but her lips felt stiff. They took her up carefully and laid her on the old lounge. The babies started to climb up over her at once, and howled fearfully when Bridget pulled them down with an ungentle shake and sat them on the floor. Then she went to answer the door bell and ushered in Miss Armitage.

Dr. Baker came down at the same moment. "Can't you shut those children up in some dungeon? They've voices like a foghorn. Ah, Miss Armitage. How is this patient?"

"Oh, I'm—better," raising up suddenly then falling back in a half faint.

"Don't stir, keep as still as you can. You've no strength to throw away on make believes. See here, babies," and he disgorged a paper of peppermints that at once soothed broken hearts.

"When will Mrs. Borden return?"

"Well, she'll be home to dinner," and Bridget grinned. "Things were all well enough when she went out. You see there's some weddin' fixings goin' on, and sure Miss Borden deserves a good husband when she's waited five years. How's the old lady?"

"It's pretty bad with her, though there's no immediate signs of her dying. But it's paralysis. Her limbs are cold and useless and I think it is creeping up her left side. She'll be another baby added to the family, unless she will go to a hospital which would be far better for her. She must have a steady nurse. I've been rather afraid of this."

"I must go and see to my dinner. Miss Armitage won't you stay until the ladies come home?"

Miss Armitage signified her willingness and laid aside her hat.

The babies were fairly gorging themselves.

"I'll be in again presently. I'll leave this for the child, to be given every half hour and she is to lie perfectly still."

Miss Armitage smiled down in the pallid face. It had grown quite thin again, but it

seemed to hold an ethical sweetness. Marilla put out one slim hand.

"It seems too bad the old lady should be taken ill at this juncture," said Mrs. Seymour. "And Marilla's been such a faithful child. She's been growing tall this summer and autumn and I suppose has run ahead of her strength. Then with the two children to look after—well a little nurse girl has rather hard lines—they seldom have more than one, or if they do the others are older. My two boys are in boarding school. I've wished one was a girl, they are so much more company for the mother. But I'd wanted *her* to be pretty," she cast a sidelong glance at the twins. "It's a pity Jack should have taken all the beauty."

The twins felt so comfortable over the candy that they went to playing with their blocks. Miss Armitage gave her patient the second dose of her medicine and she closed her eyes.

There was almost a shriek as Bridget opened the hall door with—"the merciful saints preserve us! Has Jack been run over by one of them fury things?"

Jack was crying and the blood was streaming from his nose all over his blouse.

"He's been fighting, the bad boy, with a nasty, dirty tramp!"

Bridget in her inmost heart hoped he had the worst of it. "Whist!" she exclaimed, "there's two sick folks in the house, the doctor's been an' he's coming again!"

"Sick! Oh, what has happened?"

"Well, the old lady's had a stroke, an' Marilla had a bad faint again. I thought sure she was dead."

Mrs. Borden dropped into the hall chair and began to cry hysterically.

"Jack, go straight up to the bath room" said his aunt.

"And the neighbors came in, Mrs. Seymour to talk through that funnel, and then Miss Armitage and the doctor," went on Bridget.

"It's a pity one can't stir out of the house without something happening," sobbed the mistress. "And we're both so tired."

"There dear, come up stairs." Florence took Mrs. Borden by the arm, and they ascended together. Now I'll go and look after Jack."

She put a big apron over her dress. Jack sat on the bath room floor crying.

"Get up and take off those dirty things. Come, your father will soon be home and I don't know what he'll do to you," said his aunt.

"He may strap me if he likes, but I ain't going to be called a snotnosed scabby sneak of a devil—"

"Hush! hush! I won't listen to such a talk—"

"—And he slapped me in the face, and I kicked his shins good, and then we fit and I give him a punch in the belly and a good bunk in the eye—"

"Stop Jack, I won't hear another word. Let me get you washed up. There comes your father."

Jack's nose had stopped bleeding and he was washed and put in some clean clothes. Mrs. Borden laid aside her wrap and hat and went through to the nursery. The peppermint must have been a sedative to nerves and stomach for the twins looked up with an angelic smile and went on house building. Mrs. Seymour made the explanations.

"What could Marilla have been doing? She was well enough when we went out."

Miss Armitage gave the hand she held a gentle squeeze and she saw the eyelids quiver.

"I'm sure I am very much obliged to you both. I was sorry to miss you that day you called, Miss Armitage. Oh dear, how you must have been frightened! And poor Aunt Hetty! Is it really true—"

"The doctor couldn't tell the absolute danger so soon—"

"Oh, I think it has been coming on some time. She's dragged her feet and she had a quick, almost spiteful way of walking, if one may call it that. She protested against people slouching round without animation enough to lift their feet. And some days she wouldn't come down to any meal. Well, she's a pretty old lady; we've always let her have her way."

Jack came into the room rather meek but a handsome little fellow in spite of a lump on his forehead. He had run out of doors without waiting to hear the result of Marilla's fall.

"Well, Captain!" said his father, holding out his hand.

Mrs. Seymour went home after proffering her services if she should be needed through

the night. The dinner bell rang and Miss Borden insisted the guest must go down to dinner and she would stay with the children.

"We're having our dinner a little late this evening on account of a guest; otherwise I would accept. I can stay half an hour longer. Then if you won't mind my coming around about nine to hear the doctor's verdict."

"Oh, you are very sympathetic. Thank you. I only hope Marilla won't have a bad time as she did last summer. Why she's never fainted since."

Jack behaved beautifully at the table. No one spoke of the fight. But he kept up a shivery thought of wondering if the ball he had thrown at Marilla had really hurt her. It wasn't a hard ball, at least not as hard as they had sometimes in the street.

No one appeared very hungry. Mrs. Borden went up to look after Aunt Hetty who seemed disinclined to talk and only wanted a cup of tea. Mr. Borden looked at Marilla who had fallen asleep. Then he went through to the other room and took Jack on his knee.

"Now let's hear about the fight," he said, but his voice didn't seem very stern.

Jack really wanted to cry. He felt sort of bruised and beaten though he had knocked down his adversary and would have stamped on him if his mother had not appeared at that moment and carried him off.

"Well, you see"—and the boy winked very hard.

"Who begun it?"

"Why, that Patsy's a reg'lar bum! He's called me names—he plays hookey too, and he tried to trip me up and I give him a left-hander, and he called me a stinking pup and ever so many nasty names and then we went at it. Papa, you may strap me if you want to, but if I hadn't fit the boys would have made fun of me and called me sissy, and we went at it like fury. He made my nose bleed, and I guess I gave him a black eye; and I kicked his shins—he's got fat legs. He's just a bounder and teacher said he'd wind up in the reform school. I just wish he would!" with an angry zest.

"How do boys learn such shocking talk?" asked Aunt Florence, "When they never hear it at home, and as for fighting—"

"It is in the outside air and perhaps like

measles runs through boyhood. Jack, I want you to stand up for yourself though I don't admire street fights."

"But I won't be called nasty names, and he said I was a sneak of a devil—"

"Try and keep out of the way of such boys. But if you *must* fight stand up to it boldly. I think you didn't get the worst of it, but I guess it's good your mother came along just then, and now little boy you had better go to bed."

Jack was very glad nothing had been asked him about Marilla. He was tired and drowsy. But Aunt Florence said, "Jack I think you were a very bad boy."

Dr. Baker came in and took another look at Marilla whose pulse was still very fluttering.

"What do you suppose it is?" asked Mrs. Borden, anxiously.

"The child has a weak heart. Perhaps no organic disease at present, and if she gets through the next two or three years safely all may go well with her. But she ought not have any severe strain. Do you know anything about her family?"

"She hasn't any, I took her from that

Bethany Home. She's a nice, willing, pleasant girl and a splendid hand with babies. But she was with Miss Armitage all through that awful time we had with the children teething, and the babies *are* good. I resolved I'd never make children so troublesome as Jack was, waiting on them hand and foot. I've had a different system with them."

"The system seems to have worked well, but I think you need a stronger nursemaid."

"I've never let her lift them, I knew it was not safe for them," laughing. Though think how poor children carry babies about; but now tell me about Aunt Hetty."

"I think it is the beginning of the end. You can't quite tell, but she's pretty well worn out with the years, and she must have a steady nurse. A hospital would be best."

"Yes, we will talk that over."

"Have you any one for tonight?"

"No. Is it as bad as that?" and Mrs. Borden turned pale.

"I should advise an emergency nurse for a week or so; by that time you can make some plans."

Mrs. Vanderveer was comfortable, but she did not want to be left alone.

"Oh, isn't it dreadful, Florence, that this should happen just now. If it only could have waited until Christmas," Mrs. Borden said with tears in her eyes. I meant you should have such a happy wedding. You've always been like an own sister to me."

"Well, we won't worry tonight. Only—"

Miss Armitage came in and heard the story through.

"Let me telephone at once to the nurses' home, then you will feel relieved. And perhaps it would be a good thing to send Marilla to me for a little while again."

"I cannot do without a nurse girl."

"But a week or two may restore Marilla."

The nurse came, a wholesome middle aged body who had been for weeks with a helpless paralytic. And so the midnight found them all comfortable. Marilla was left on the lounge. Miss Armitage sat a long while in her soft wrapper planning about the child she felt she must rescue. Oh, she *did* want her. She did not try to give any reason for the love that had stolen almost unaware in her heart, or the

faith that this child would not disappoint her. Every year she was growing older, every year she longed more for some one of her very own. Why should she not play fairy godmother in earnest? She must have Dr. Richard's verdict.

For Mrs. Borden with many kindly qualities looked at matters only as they applied to herself. When Marilla was eighteen she would come to the freedom of a bound-out girl, too old to begin another life, settled in a rut—if she lived. Was she not one of the little ones that might be rescued and live out a higher life? There were many who could not, but she felt she must go carefully.

Mrs. Holmes proved an admirable nurse and Aunt Hetty took to her in an astonishing manner. She was attractive to the children, as well, who greeted her with a smile.

On the next day Dr. Baker admitted the paralysis was gaining rapidly and thought she could not last long. That evening she said to the nurse, "Send Mr. Borden up here, and you stay down with the ladies."

He came up and greeted her cordially, hoping for better things, as friends are wont to say.

"No, John, there will not be any better, so we won't indulge in make believes. Carry and James were quite sure this way of living wasn't good for me. They wanted me to buy a house and make it over to them and they would care for me the rest of my life. I've lived with Carry, paid her good board, too, so I knew what that would be. I couldn't live quite alone, you see—I always wanted some one round that I could see if I wanted to. Old people do get queer. So when I had to forclose here I made you this offer. You're the only one of them all who has not asked me outright for money, and I honor you for it. Your mortgage here is twenty-three hundred."

"Yes," he said with a vague sort of hope that she wasn't going to ask him to settle it.

"I want you to get it cancelled; I'll give you the order. I've meant to do this the last year. Carry worried so at me that I went away with her and felt none the better for it. I'd rather staid at home with Bridget. So you see to that at once. And I want to make a new will."

"Aunt Hetty! Well, I don't know what to say," and his tone showed his surprise. "Don't

say anything." She gave her little cackle of a laugh that always had a sound of derision in it. "You know I can't take any of it with me, and I'd like to know it will make few people pleased and happy. I'm going to make you executor, so get some one else to write out the will. I fixed it to my liking today. You've all been very good to put up with my whims an and queernesses. Old people don't like too much advice, especially where money is concerned. Look in the second drawer there—in a long envelope."

"Thank you for this expression of your satisfaction. The babies and Jack may have been a nuisance at times."

"But that little girl's been good enough to make up for any annoyance—not that there's been much. Jack's a smart, funny little fellow. You know they're all more or less bad, but they grow up pretty fair. There now, I'm tired."

Mr. Borden wished her a kindly good-night and went down stairs to recount the wonderful interview.

"Oh, John!" Mrs. Borden leaned her head down on her husband's shoulder. What a

streak of good fortune! Now we really do own the house free and clear, I thought our summering would be quite moderate but it wasn't. Still it did the babies an immense deal of good after they got over their awful time. And they're so nice and well now, and are growing better looking all the time. If Marilla only *could* make their hair curl! It's so stringy, and we haven't worried at Aunt Hetty for what she did or what she didn't do, and weren't snappy when she found fault. I used to think she needn't have rung for Marilla quite so much, but the child never minded running up and down."

"How has she been today?"

"Well, I don't just know; Dr. Baker said she must keep pretty still, so she's laid on the old lounge, but the babies would crawl over her. It does seem as if we must have someone else—an older person, though some of them object to taking out children. But if we want to get much sewing done—"

"I think I'll have a seamstress for a week or so," said Aunt Florence, "time goes on so fast."

Marilla had gone up stairs to her own bed,

where Bridget had crooned over her in tender Irish fashion.

"An' I'm sore afraid them babies 'll be the death of you, poor lamb! They drag on you so, and their chatter would drive me crazy."

"But they're so funny."

"I don't call it funny with their hundred and fifty wants," sniffed Bridget.

Marilla turned faint now and then but for several days she was not sent out with the children. Miss Armitage came over every day to inquire about both invalids. Mrs. Vanderveer dozed a good deal and the numbness seemed crawling further up her body.

"She may have another stroke and she may go just this way," said Mrs. Holmes, "I wouldn't give her more than a month at the longest. I've seen it so many times. But it is merciful for them not to last years."

It was mid-October then. The seamstress proved a treasure. Garments were completed and laid away.

"I want most of the work finished up in November," said Mrs. Borden, "then we can plan all the other matters."

"I shall have to look up some one else. I

want a nurse to take up the children in the morning and wash and dress them, and they must go out. They're losing all their lovely weather. Marilla doesn't seem to get along at all. If she's going to develop some heart trouble she will just be good for nothing. Of course, when I took her she seemed healthy enough, and it was the best thing to do then. John has had some good luck this fall and we don't need to think of saving up money for the mortgage. I could afford a regular nurse, and it would ease me up so much. I don't suppose they'd take Marilla back at the Home."

"Talk to John about it if; we *could* find a new place for her. Why, she would make a nice little waitress. If you could keep three girls," laughingly.

"Dear me, we must not spread out too rapidly, and somehow I'd hate to give her up. She trains the children so nicely. And have you noticed how sort of gentlemanly Jack is growing toward her? He was real rude."

Jack had experienced many qualms of conscience about throwing the ball that day, but Marilla made no reference to it. Still she might tell Bridget, she and Bridget were such

cronies, and Bridget would make an awful fuss."

"Marilla," he said one night when she was getting him ready for bed—"I didn't mean to hurt you that day with the ball—you know. I didn't think girls were so tender."

"I was tired and there had been something stopping my breath like, now and then, maybe it wasn't the ball."

"You were good not to tell on a fellow. I'll never, never hurt you again, nor pinch you, nor be ugly to you. You're so sweet, Marilla," and he clasped his arms around her neck, kissing her.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARK OF LOVE

The glowing golden October weather had given place to several lowering days. Furnaces and grates were started up, and overcoats brought out, and pedestrians hurried along. Even children did not stop to play, for now a cold drizzle had set in.

It was very warm and cheery in Miss Armitage's library. There was a fire in the grate, a pot of beautiful red carnations on one stand, a great vase of roses on the other, and a dainty tea table set out with Wedgewood. Thursday afternoon she was always at home. From some cause there had been very few in. Jane came and put two big lumps of cannel coal on the fire and said a few words, then went to answer the ring at the door; it was Dr. Richards.

"I'm glad to see you," she said. "Will you please light a burner or two?"

"Oh, no, let us sit in this mysterious light and watch the blaze leaping over and around

those black hillocks. Have you been busy to-day?"

"Not very. Some days I don't feel in a working humor. I had only two calls this afternoon. Will you have a cup of tea?"

"Yes; when have you been to the Bordens?"

"Yesterday."

"And how are the invalids?"

"Mrs. Vanderveer is sinking in a comatose state; she doesn't suffer, which *is* a great blessing toward the last. As for Marilla—she made a pause.

"Well—" inquiringly.

"I'm not satisfied, she has such a blue, tired look. But she is about as usual. Dr. Richards, I want her."

Something in the tone touched him. It seemed the cry of motherhood.

"Well, wouldn't they give her up?"

"I really think they would; a friend came to see if they did not want her nursemaid, a nice well trained girl of twenty; an excellent seamstress. She is going to California. Mrs. Borden told me this as we were down in the hall. Dr. Baker said something about the child's health that rather startled her. But

before we could have any discussion another visitor called. She thinks Marilla doesn't have anything much to do; but the babies are a constant care. They want to be entertained every minute of the time. Violet is developing quite a temper and slaps her little nurse. All her mother said was 'Violet, that's naughty.' But you should have seen Pansy speak some Mother Goose rhymes. Marilla had been training her. The gestures, the roll of the eyes, the coquettish turn of the head was the daintiest thing you ever saw. Then she repeated—'Where are you going, my pretty maid?' and she had a little milk pail on her arm, and she managed to keep the two parts wonderfully distinct—it was remarkable in a child not three years old, and when she said —'Then I won't marry you, my pretty maid' and answered so pertly—'Nobody asked you, sir, she said,' it would have done credit to an exhibition. Her mother sprang up and kissed her rapturously, crying—'Isn't she the dearest and sweetest thing and the smartest! Think of her learning that and acting it off so completely, and not three years old! She is smarter than Violet'—and then Violet set up

such a howl! Her mother pacified her by saying Marilla should tell her a piece, and after several efforts Cinderella did induce her to say by a great deal of prompting 'Milkman, Milkman, where have you been?' Think of the wear on the child's nerves, and she looked so tired. I really couldn't stand it a moment longer. They think she has nothing to do but just amuse those two strong irrepressible children who climb over her and torment her in every fashion. I can't stand it. I hardly slept last night thinking of it."

"Can't you bring her over for a visit?"

"I thought of proposing that. If I could persuade her to transfer the child to me—"

"But if she gets another nurse?"

"Yes, I must try. The strain on her is too great, and now for almost a week she has not been out of the house; Mrs. Borden bewails it for the childrens' sake. She thinks only of them with a mother's selfishness, and she doesn't give Marilla credit for these pretty ways or their intelligence. She is just their nurse girl. It is a cruel waste of the child's gifts."

"I'd like to see Dr. Baker; most of all I'd like to see Marilla, but it wouldn't be etiquette to call."

"I'll go tomorrow with courage enough to have a gentle talk or a straight out one," said Miss Armitage resolutely. "We try to save other lives, why not this one? And this one is dear to me. It has so much of promise in it, and life gets lonely sometimes."

He longed to come into it, but he kept his promise. Until she made some sign he must be content with friendship. He rose abruptly and said he must be going. She did not detain him.

It was raining a-softly now and he hurried along. His office was in a little ell part in a rather inviting looking house, and he took his meals with the tenant. The office boy was on the lookout for him, it was time he went home.

"There's a gentleman in there waiting for you," he said with his good-night.

The gentleman was comfortably ensconced in the Morris chair, smoking a cigar. Doctor Richards took a second look.

"Why, Lorimer!" he exclaimed. "Where have you dropped from? I haven't seen you in an age—but I'm glad, old fellow; I was feeling rather down; I should have had a gay presentiment."

"Remembering old times when we were both bloated aristocrats, favorites with the gods."

"And are now earning daily bread," laughed the doctor. "At least I am and trying to help suffering humanity. Isn't that neatly put?"

"I don't know whether I can claim all that; now and then I get some poor fellow's affairs out of a snarl and make him pay for it, and one end of something has drifted here to Newton and I'm after that, but I thought I'd hunt you up first. I've been here a good half hour."

"And supper is ready in the house. Then we will have a good hour before any one drops in. Come in," and he opened a side door into a hall.

There were three persons at the table, an elderly couple and a woman in the thirties. They made Mr. Lorimer cordially welcome and the supper was inviting. The guest asked some questions about Newton which was a quiet rather old fashioned town quite set in its ways.

Afterward they settled themselves comfortably in the office.

"I've come to hunt up some one—do you

know anything about a Bethany Home for orphans, girls, I believe."

Dr. Richards roused from his lazy position. Yes, I know about it, though I never been on the staff. Why?"

"I want to learn about a child placed there four or five years ago. Let me see," referring to a memorandum, "name, Marilla Bond; mother and father died in this town."

"Marilla Bond. Yes. I know the child. What of her?"

"I'll begin at the very first. Hardly two years ago Peter Schermerhorn died at the age of ninety-eight. He was the black sheep of an otherwise respectable family, went off and spent his portion in riotous living, afterward bought a tract of ground above Harlem, turned hermit, raised geese and ducks and pigs, married and had three daughters and they in turn married, glad, I suppose, to get away from the penurious living. So it went on. He had to give up the pigs and geese, did a little gardening and two years ago died without a will. Oddly enough he had kept a family record which has been of great service to us. The old shanty was a disgrace, the ground valuable.

The city was bringing up one of its fine avenues and a syndicate made a proffer for the land. Of course the heirs soon scented this out, and our firm has been trying to settle the estate so the property can be turned into money, and a good deed given. We have found about everybody, I believe, but the mother of this child who is in very direct descent, eluded us a long while."

"And this child is one of the heirs?" in surprise.

"Exactly. Her mother came here after her marriage. The father was killed in some machinery mishap. The mother was in a store, a bakery, I believe, and dying, gave her little girl to the friend she had lived with, and the friend married and went out to Easton. We found she did not take the child with her but put her in this Bethany Home with some important papers. So we want the child and the papers."

"The child was twelve, a year ago September. She was bound-out to some fairly nice people as a little nursemaid. And an heiress!" in a tone of glad surprise.

"Well not to any great extent. There are a

good many heirs it seems—ten thousand or so. But we had to know whether she was living or not on account of the title."

His little Cinderella! Truly this was a fairy story. "Oh, are you *quite* sure?" he said.

"Oh, there's no doubt, if she is the true heir. But the woman at Easton attested a very straight story and knew of the husband's death, though she had not known him personally. The money is on the mother's side, you see, so his death is neither here nor there. And now—can't we go out and interview this place and the keeper?"

"Hardly tonight. The matron is a rather rigid person I believe. We had best tackle her by daylight, and the child is almost in this vicinity. A rather unusual child I think, very sweet natured. Oh, I can't express all my delight. She is the kind of girl that ought to be educated, that should live in an atmosphere of love, and she is not really strong enough to take the rough and tumble of life. Oh, I can't tell you how glad I am. Lorimer surveyed his friend with a rather humorous smile. They had been chums during a summer in Switzer-

land and Holland, but he had not thought Richards much given to either love or romance.

Then they branched off into old times when both had been rather wasteful. Lorimer was working hard to redeem that youthful extravagance; Dr. Richards cared nothing at all for the moneyed end of life.

He would fain have kept his friend all night but Lorimer had engaged his room at a hotel. They were to meet as soon as possible in the morning.

Bethany Home was quite in the suburbs, reached by a walk after one had left the trolley. The house was a big rambling place to which there had been made several additions. It had been a gift from a benevolently disposed woman, with a small endowment that was occasionally added to. There was quite a spacious garden and an abundance of rose vines.

Yes, Mrs. Johnson was in and they were ushered into a large old fashioned apartment, scrupuously neat and formal. Mrs. Johnson was a somewhat portly woman turned of sixty, whose face had settled into severe lines, and she eyed her visitors rather suspiciously.

"I am Dr. Richards," he began with a softening of the countenance, "and my friend Mr. Lorimer is a lawyer from New York who comes on a matter of business concerning a little girl who was an inmate of the Home until a little over a year ago—Marilla Bond."

"Yes"—in a rather questioning manner.

Lorimer told his story and the surprise in the woman's face was evident.

"What is of most importance is to learn whether there are any papers to substantiate the claim. One has to be careful in the legal matters."

She seemed to consider. "Yes," rather reluctantly. "The person who brought her here gave quite a box of papers and some trinkets to my safe keeping. We take charge of them until the girls are eighteen—then they have served out their time and are legally their own mistresses. Ours is quite a private institution and has no connection with the city, although it has a board of officers, of which I am president. Of course I keep watch over the girls who are bound-out. This Marilla has a very nice place. She was away all summer with the family. One of our managers

visited this Mrs. Borden on her return and found everything satisfactory and the child content."

"Could we look over the papers?"

She seemed rather loth to produce them but she could find no excuse. She recalled the fact that she had seen Dr. Richards' name in connection with the Children's Hospital.

Certainly there was enough to substantiate the claim. A marriage certificate, an attestation of the baby's birth, and old Dr. Langdon was still alive, though he had retired from practice. A packet of letters as well, two notices of Mr. Bond's accident and death. Everything was ready for corroboration.

Mr. Lorimer gathered up the important papers. At first Mrs. Johnson rather demurred about his taking them away.

"Why, I would have no object in destroying them. I should not be the gainer by it. And this is the last heir we have to trace. Now we can proceed to a settlement. The syndicate takes more than half the property and pays cash. The remainder can be easily sold. No one seems disposed to demand an extravagant price. You will hear from me before long, and I will return the papers."

After they had settled that and left the lady, Lorimer said—

"Now let us interview this Doctor Langdon."

He was a somewhat feeble, white haired old man but received them very graciously and was much interested in the story. Turning to his book he refreshed his memory. Yes, there was the birth of the child. The mother he put down as rather delicate. A note some time after substantiated the accident and death of the father. He was very willing to give an affidavit. "You've been a tremendous help to me, Al," said Mr. Lorimer, "estates that have to be settled this way are an enormous bother, and thanks are poor pay," laughing.

"I believe I shall demand something more. The child will need a guardian. She has several warm friends here, I'm not willing to lose sight of her. So I shall ask that office."

"Well—why not? Some one must act until she is of age. Yes, I'll remember. I'm glad you spoke of it. I'll be up again. Indeed I'm quite curious to see how she takes her fortune."

So the friends parted. Dr. Richards made

several calls, stopped for some lunch, found a number of patients awaiting him and a message that had come from Miss Armitage, who wished to see him at once. She had had quite an eventful morning as well. Some vague presentiment had haunted her about Marilla and after disposing of a few business calls she hurried around to Arch street.

Mrs. Borden answered the door.

"Oh, Miss Armitage! We're so full of trouble! Aunt Hetty has just died and Marilla—oh, I don't know what will become of the child!"

"She is not ill?" in a tone of anxiety.

"Well, come in and sit down and let me tell you. They thought the first part of the night the poor old lady was dropping off quietly. Then toward morning she seemed to rally, and kept calling for Marilla. John had been up there most of the time and he said bring the child up. We didn't suppose she was really conscious. So Marilla went up. It was daylight, and just as soon as she went to the bedside the poor old lady held out both hands, and Mrs. Holmes said she really smiled, and then a horrible thing happened, like a fit, and her

mouth all curled up and her eyes rolled up to the whites and Marilla screamed and fainted and the old lady was dead in a minute, and then the child fainted several times and they put her in her own bed—we'd had her down stairs. What did your doctor say about her last summer? Dr. Baker said her heart was weak. Now I think they oughtn't have sent a girl out from the Home who had any such thing the matter with her. She had it real easy, sitting on the floor playing with the babies. And we never let her carry them up and down stairs or put anything hard on her, and now you know they run all over and are very little trouble. They have always been such good babies, but if she is going to faint at every little thing she won't be much good. Mr. Borden has gone for that other girl and to attend to the necessary business. There will be the funeral and we shall have to take in some of the folks, I know. Mrs. Holmes will stay right along until we are straight again, but, it's asking a good deal I admit" and she paused.

"Yes, let me take her." Miss Armitage had

come primed with several arguments, but she saw they would not be needed.

"Of course the shock was awful. Mrs. Holmes said she wasn't surprised, for Marilla was just going to clasp the outstretched hands, but the old lady came back to her natural looks and I'm so glad; but of course Marilla will be haunted by the sight—"

"Yes, and you will have so much on your hands. Do you think she could walk that far or shall I order a hack?"

"Oh, she came down to the nursery and Bridget brought her up some breakfast. There's the undertaker—"

"I'll go up to the nursery," said Miss Armitage.

A very wan little girl was pillowed upon the lounge. Jack had been sent to school without hearing of the happening. Violet was marching up and down ringing a little bell and saying "Go to door, Illa, go to door." Pansy was leaning over her with a book crying authoritatively—"Read to me, read to me."

Miss Armitage lifted Pansy down but she started to climb up again. The lady sat down

in the place and drew Marilla's head to her bosom and let the child cry there.

"Illa can't read to you now," she said. "Poor Illa's sick."

"Tain't your Illa," said the child obstinately.

"My dear," Miss Armitage began soothingly, kissing the tremulous lips, "you are going home with me. It has been dreadful I know, but you must try to forget it. Jane will be glad to have you and Dr. Richards will comfort you. Don't you remember what a nice time we had last summer? There dear—little Cinderella."

Marilla smiled faintly through her tears.

"Oh, I am so glad. It was so sudden you know, and when she stretched out her hands."

"She must have known you, and after all it was sweet to be remembered then. Are you very weak? But I'm afraid you couldn't walk to Loraine place."

"I'm so—so shaky—"

Aunt Florence entered the room and snatched the bell from Violet. "You must not make such a noise," she declared. "Oh Miss Armitage, you are always shocked by a death,

aren't you? And poor Aunt Hetty has been dying the last week, though the doctor said she did not really suffer. But she's past eighty and that's a good long life. I do wonder if she really knew she was calling for Marilla, and the poor child has had a bad time. How good of you to offer to take her for awhile. Funerals are so dismal to a child."

"I think I had better have a cab," said the guest. "Will you kindly telephone for one?"

Miss Borden assented. Then she brought a frock for Marilla, and between them they had her dressed. Violet tumbled her box of blocks on the floor and began kicking them around.

"Oh, dear! When you want quiet, children are always the worst! When that new girl comes she shall take them out in their carriage and we will have peace for a little while."

Mr. Borden entered at that moment with a very pleasant-faced young woman.

"Come through in my room," said Miss Borden, "and you can watch for the cab." She shut the door between, but the babies burst into a howl and she went back to pacify them.

"Oh, I do feel better," exclaimed Marilla, and her eyes lightened up, "but no one seems to know just what to do to amuse the babies, I've grown so used to it."

"They must get along without you for awhile. It is a pity they couldn't be sent away as well."

The cab came presently. Mr. Borden almost carried Marilla down stairs. "Now get good and rested," he said. "It will be a sad time. Death always is."

Oh, how delightful the beautiful house was! They went through to the library where the grate fire had been kindled and Marilla drew a long, happy breath. Why she felt almost well. Jane brought her some hot milk and presently spread a dainty little luncheon on the library table. They had quite a cheerful time and it seemed as if she improved every moment.

Dr. Richards thought he would never get through with the office patients this afternoon and he was impatient to know what had happened. As for his own experiences they must be kept to himself for some time. Indeed he almost felt as if it was a dream. He had seen

Marilla only three times since her return. First she had gone to the office to report to him and let him see what the seaside had done for her, then the episode of measles had kept her indoors as well as the babies. He had met her twice with her precious freight, and even on Sundays she had not found time to go to Miss Armitage.

She told the story over to save the child's nerves. "And so the poor old lady has gone. Yet I think it hardly fair for you to have to wait upon her so much."

"Oh then Mrs. Holmes came and she was very nice. But as soon as I came in with the babies she went out for her walk and Aunt Hetty wanted me to read to her. She liked so to have me read, and somehow she seemed gentler and quite sweet like after she was so poorly. I liked it better than being so much with the children. They were growing so big and strong and wanted to keep tumbling over me. It made me so tired sometimes."

"Marilla is never going back there," Dr. Richards said decisively. "She isn't strong enough for a nurse girl."

"No, she is not going back. I went out

awhile ago to see that Mrs. Johnson, but she thought the place an excellent one, and that it was a bad thing to change girls about, making them dissatisfied everywhere, but I meant to bide my time, and find an opportunity. Now I think they will be willing to give her up as they have a grown-up woman. She came while I was there. Dr. Baker told them Marilla had a weak heart, and I think it startled them. They have no idea how hard she has been worked."

Oh, he longed to tell her of Marilla's good fortune. Somehow they must manage to share the child between them. She had the lovely home and the mother heart, and he wanted a home with a sweet little girl in it.

At Arch street there was a good deal of confusion. Cousins and nieces who had called only at rare intervals on Mrs. Vanderveer were most attentive, suddenly. They did wonder between themselves if Aunt Hetty was going to leave *all* her money to John Borden!

The new nurse, Lizzie by name, was really a great comfort. She took up the babies in the morning, bathed and dressed them and gave them their breakfast. They still took

their midday nap but she managed to introduce some discipline, yet she was not harsh. Master Jack stood a little in awe of her. She was a good seamstress also.

So passed the three days and they brought Aunt Hetty down in the parlor and put her in a fine casket, keeping the doors shut until the hour for service. Mrs. Seymour had the nurse bring the children in her house. So they said prayers reverently, sang some lovely parting hymns and laid her away, her long life on earth finished.

The relatives were asked to meet at Mr. Borden's office the next day at ten to hear the will read.

Was ever any will satisfactory where property was divided up into small gifts? Five hundred dollars to this one and to that one, three hundred apiece to some others. Jack, Jr., had five hundred, the babies, three hundred, and Marilla Bond, three hundred.

"It was very nice of her in a way," said Mrs. Borden, "but I think one hundred dollars would have been remembrance enough for the little waiting on she did, and I find Lizzie is of much more service than she was. Of course

she costs more. I shall go out to the Home some day and give her up on account of her health. Miss Armitage might as well take her. She'll make a nice little waitress maid. And now that the house is clear I feel that we needn't economize so closely. You and John get your five hundred with the rest, and she gave me her diamond ear rings after we came back in the summer. It was smart in her not to have John make her will, so none of them can say he persuaded her. Well, now we can settle ourselves to the next thing."

CHAPTER XII

A WONDERFUL HAPPENING

Mrs. Borden was surprised that Mrs. Johnson received back Marilla Bond's indentures with no remonstrance or objection. She certainly had not known about this weak heart. The child had never been ill, but something else might come to hand. She was glad there was no other reason and that the little girl had proved trustworthy.

Miss Armitage was also surprised that Mrs. Johnson would not agree to an immediate transferrence.

"You may go on keeping her for awhile," said the lady in a lofty manner. "*You* may tire of her. We will see presently."

That was all the permission she could get and it was a blow to Miss Armitage. She had come to love the child with a fervor she had hardly dreamed of and Marilla simply adored her. Dr. Richards teased her a little about her fortune. She was quite a welcome guest at the Bordens and the twins almost devoured

her when she came, but poor Bridget was nearly heart broken.

"If I had a little girl of my own I could hardly love her any better, and Marilla Bond, if I was a rich woman I'd steal you some day and we'd go off to some place in Europe, Paris, maybe, and have a beautiful house and servants to wait on us and horses and a carriage and we'd travel about like grand folks. It would be as nice as that night when you went to the palace and danced with the Prince, and I'd buy you fine clothes and diamonds and I'd wait on you hand and foot; I don't wonder the babies loved you. You are the sweetest thing the good God ever sent down here!"

And then Marilla hugged Bridget and kissed her and they both cried out of pure love.

"That Lizzie does very well and don't bother me, but it isn't like having some one to slip up to you with a smile of sunshine that warms your heart through and through."

Yet it was flattering to be so well loved, but she did not want to come back and be a nurse maid again. Ah, if she could only stay with Miss Armitage! She began to study a little, she was so eager to learn. The music en-

chanted her and she was delighted to pick out tunes with her soft touch.

"I don't understand what Mrs. Johnson means," Miss Armitage said to the doctor. "I offered to adopt Marilla and educate her and see that she was well placed in life. I have no near relatives, and I don't believe I shall ever marry, I like my life as it is, but she was so sort of mysterious and secretive and declared she could not give an answer at present, as if she had some further plans. I did make the most of her having a weak heart—you said so and Doctor Baker as well. Oh, do you believe there is any real danger?"

She turned pale at the thought.

"With care I think she will outgrow it. She has lived in an overstrained atmosphere with those children. Then it was a dreadful shock to have the old lady die that way when she was looking for a tender recognition. What happened about a fortnight before?"

"I do not know, I found her unconscious. The ladies were out, the old Aunt had a stroke. It is such a sweet, promising life, and can be developed into something worth while. You may think me visionary—"

Oh, why could she not see this other life that might be blessed and broadened by her love!

"I am afraid there is something back of it all that I cannot fathom," she continued. "It haunts me. Suppose you were to see this Mrs. Johnson. A man can sometimes penetrate plans—"

And he was in collusion with Mrs. Johnson, keeping the secret from the woman he loved, but if there should be some mistake!

"Yes, I will see Mrs. Johnson," he said slowly.

A light footfall came down the stairs, and Marilla flew to his side.

"Oh, I thought I heard your voice," and both small hands clasped his. "Fairy godmother I have spelled all those queer words until I can just feel them in my brain. Oh, doctor, when I wrote you that letter last summer wasn't some words wrongly spelled? You see I *had* forgotten some things, and I am learning so much. I want to stay here, and I don't believe any one else wants me—only the babies might."

When she glanced up at times it seemed as

if the pupil that was so much darker than the iris that it flooded it with the tint of the under wave that seemed to overflow the crest of the swell. They were unusual eyes, changing with every emotion. She looked quite well again, and the lips were rosy.

"Oh, you don't?" with a queer little smile. "Well the babies can't have you."

"Oh, Bridget thinks if she were rich she would run away with me," and she laughingly detailed the woman's plan for their journeying about.

"If Bridget should get a windfall—servants do sometimes, we should have to keep a sharp eye on you both, and now I must go."

"Can't he stay to dinner?" She crossed over and pressed Miss Armitage's hand to her soft cheek.

"Why we shall be glad to have him, but you must notify Jane and Norah."

She returned with the compliments of both. While they were waiting for the summons and being beguiled with her pleasant chatter he was thinking what a charming family group they would make. If he only had the old fortune!

They had an enjoyable time and when they returned to the library she begged him to play chess. She was so fond of following the devious course of the opposing parties.

"Office calls will not begin until eight," he said and she rolled up the table and brought out the beautiful chess men. She was always so deft it was a pleasure to watch her.

He was playing for the white queen; he often did. This time he studied his moves cautiously. But Miss Armitage had played so much with her uncle. Then the telephone rang and he went astray.

She answered it. "For Dr. Richards, a Mr. Lorimer was in the office, wanted to see him at once. Important; everything was progressing finely. Could he not see the little heiress that evening?"

He looked at Miss Armitage in ludicrous dismay.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Your sin finds you out, doesn't it?" with an amused yet deprecating smile. "I suppose I ought to have explained before, but really I could hardly believe it would amount to anything. Marilla must have come from fairy

land to have all these things happen to her. May I ask Mr. Lorimer here?"

"Certainly. You are very mysterious."

Dr. Richards went on with the telephone talk, giving explicit directions how to find Loraine place where they were all assembled, and, all anxious to hear his story. Then he took both little soft hands in his.

"What would you say if a real fortune was coming to you?"

"Why there's Aunt Hetty's money and that will double in fourteen years, Mr. Borden said, but I like fairy godmother better than any fortune. Come, and go on with the game."

"No, I must explain to Miss Armitage. This was why Mrs. Johnson acted rather queer. She was enjoined to silence. And the funny thing was she didn't half believe it."

He sat down and placed his arm around Marilla, drawing her nearer. Miss Armitage had a little jealous pang.

"On the side of Marilla's mother an old man died recently who was nearly a hundred. He had a sort of farm and an old house and lived

like a hermit with pigs and ducks and chickens. He had six children, but they married and went off. This is the fourth generation, There was no will so they had to find all the heirs in order to get a good deed to the property. They traced Mrs. Bond and learned she has left a child. They found the woman who had kept her, but on her re-marriage she had placed the child at Bethany Home, Newton. So Mr. Lorimer, an old chum of mine came to this place, as he is a member of the firm settling the estate. We went out to the Home—"

"How long ago?" asked Miss Armitage.

"Well, something over a fortnight. We had a rather difficult time to persuade Mrs. Johnson to give up the important papers. She is very matter of fact and I suppose has heard many a wild story that came to nothing. You see she always keeps whatever comes with a child until the girl is eighteen, when they are given to her. We found old Doctor Langdon who could substantiate everything and who gave an affidavit, so they were to proceed at once to a settlement. The city has taken a strip for an avenue extension, and

they want a good deed. I heard from Lorimer a few days ago, and he said that everything was right, that he should be at Newton shortly and wanted to see Marilla Bond."

"And how much may this wonderful fortune be?" The lady's tone was slightly sarcastic. "They are apt to shrink by payment time."

"Somewhere about ten thousand, I believe. Not enough to make one a millionaire, but it will educate her and give her some journeys outside of fairy land," laughing a little. "Perhaps fairy godmother won't send you adrift for such an accident," looking down in the wondering eyes.

"The best fortune of all is fairy godmother." Marilla went around and kissed her, clasped both her hands.

"When I heard from Lorimer that it was all fair sailing I went out and called on Mrs. Johnson. Well, you should have seen her! She was quite set up on a pinnacle and declared that she must write out the story. It is as well I suppose that Newton should have it first hand, and she will take most of the glory. The Bordens will be surprised."

There was a touch of awkwardness in the silence. Miss Armitage did not take kindly to the fortune. She would rather have the child owe everything to her. She had plenty of money. It would be like a young sister growing up beside her, for somehow she felt curiously young. Marilla had a simple charming grace that would render her very attractive. Her perfect candor and honesty joined with a peculiar fine reticence unusual in a child had appealed strongly to Miss Armitage. Even her gratitude had a winsome delicacy in it, and it would be a gracious work to train her in lovely womanly ways through the years to come.

Did the child feel the subtle atmosphere?

"Fairy godmother, you will always be the best thing in my life," she said in a soft, sweet tone. "In the summer when I was wondering in that strange country and could not remember much, I felt a sweet quiet when you came, just as if some one found me and I was safe. Oh, I had never loved any one so dearly. I saw so little of my own mother and she was always tired, fairy godmothers are different."

The door bell rang. "That must be Lor-

imer," said Dr. Richards and he reached the hall just as Jane opened the door. Miss Armitage let him greet his friend before she rose.

"Can't I bring him in here?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, yes."

"This room is my ideal, Lorimer. The grate fire and the shelves of books give one an immediate welcome. And allow me to present you to the presiding genius, Miss Armitage."

It was indeed a charming home with an atmosphere that penetrated one's soul, and they two looked as if they might have been born in it, they impressed you as being a subtle part of it. It was like a vision as Lorimer was seating himself, and his eyes caught the situation of the chess men.

"Some one made a false move," he exclaimed, laughing.

"Is the white queen in danger? I can't have her taken," Marilla said breathlessly.

"Oh, are you on her side? If I had time I'd rescue her. I suppose my friend here, the doctor, has explained my errand—the rest is

—you are the little white queen and I am an ogre come to capture you and take you away"

"But I'm not going," returned the child. "When one has a fairy godmother one is enchanted and the evil ogre is powerless."

"Oh, is it that way? Then I must sue humbly to the power above and present my case, for indeed, if you didn't want your fortune you would stop the wheels of division and perhaps be accused of contempt of court—which you don't know a word about. You are quite a little heroine with your romantic story, and I am charged to bring you into court and prove you are Marilla Bond, entitled to a slice of this pie they are going to serve."

"Are there four and twenty black birds in it?" she asked mirthfully.

"Oh, more than that, but there is no flaw in your claim, and I have unearthed a delightful relative for you, a cousin of your mother's with whom much of her early life was passed. After her marriage they seemed to fall apart as people often do, and she heard you were all dead. She has three charming girls, fourteen, eleven and seven. Mrs. Warren made me promise to bring you direct to her; she is very

anxious to see you and will take good care of you."

Miss Armitage had a stunned sort of feeling. There were relatives who might have a right to her. She was no longer a waif for some one's charity.

"You will bring her back?" she said hurriedly.

"Oh, of course. They are not likely to make her a ward in chancery as if she had a million. Dr. Richards will be her guardian, you will like that, won't you?" smiling at her bright-eyed watchfulness.

"I don't quite know what a guardian is," doubtfully, glancing at her oldest friend, "Mr. Borden never spoke of one."

"That estate has not been settled yet," remarked the doctor. "A trustee might answer for that."

"A guardian is a person appointed to see that you have a good home, and do not waste your money, but I have heard of guardians who wasted it for you. We shall have the doctor bound securely, and you must have an allowance for clothes and various needs, such as ice cream and candy."

Marilla laughed then. It seemed amusing and very delightful that the doctor should have some real right to her.

"You have never been to New York?"

"Oh, no!" with a wonder in her tone.

"Then it will be a great treat. Can she be ready by tomorrow morning?"

"Will she be really needed?"

Oh, yes, tomorrow is set for the finishing of her business; I must get back early. There is a big fight on another estate. What an amount of litigation money does make! This has been clear sailing after we found all the heirs and fenced out all those who had no claim. Miss Marilla Bond, I congratulate you, and I should really like to hear Mrs. Johnson on the subject. Were you happy there?"

"I liked it better at Mrs. Borden's, but it is best here," she answered.

They branched off into several amusing episodes. Miss Armitage ordered some coffee and cake. Lorimer glanced at the chess men.

"Why were you on the side of the white queen?" he asked.

"Because—because I chose her for Miss

Armitage, and nothing must happen to her."

Oh! There was an earnest of love in the beautiful eyes. She was a charming little girl.

Then they made all arrangements; they were to take the 8:10 train. "Could Marilla be ready that early in the morning?"

"Yes," was the rather reluctant answer.

They made their adieu. Lorimer thanked her for a delightful evening.

"I suppose it's all settled, old fellow! You are lucky with the prospect of such a home and such a presiding—shall I call her the goddess of the hearth? That room is a perfect gem, and you three people are to the manner born."

"Not so fast if you please. It is outside of my daily life, a place of rest and refreshing where a pilgrim may pause now and then."

"You two people are in love."

"I am, I admit."

"Then you are a dolt if you don't go in and win."

"I asked her more than a year ago. She gave me friendship. We are simply good comrades in our work for the world."

"She doesn't look like a woman whose heart is buried in some one's grave."

"She has a foolish, insurmountable reason. I am a few years her junior," he said in a half satiric tone. "And I have a reason that escaped me then. She is rich and I am comparatively poor."

"Nonsense! There should never be anything but pure love between the man and the woman who are the complement of each other. What a fascinating picture you three made! And you both love the child. I'm glad she is going to have a chance with education. With those eyes she ought to be beyond the ordinary."

"Then she will be in good hands."

"Al—you are an idiot. Some day you will rue this shilly-shallying."

Dr. Richards' reply was an unmirthful laugh, as if he was not rueing the mischance all the time. But he was proud and would not go back of his word.

CHAPTER XIII

A NEW ATMOSPHERE

They came back to the sleepy grate fire. Miss Armitage said—"You must go to bed for you will have to be up early in the morning."

"I shall only stay a little while," as if she had been musing over her journey. "Fairy godmother why don't you come, too?"

"Well, you see I was not asked, I am outside of all this business."

The voice was on the verge of a touch of bitterness, though nature and endeavor had made it sweet.

"Why, that's funny. They did not know how much I should want you. I'll ask the doctor in the morning. Oh, I wonder if I shall like those little cousins?"

"No, dear, you must not speak of it. There is nothing for me to do. Sometime we will go to the city together and have a nice outing."

"Are you glad the doctor is going to be my guardian, and—about the fortune?"

"You couldn't have a better one."

"Can't women be guardians? But I'd rather have you for a fairy godmother. No one else in the whole wide world could be that, you know. For the one in the dream wasn't truly alive. I don't believe she could have taken care of a sick body. Oh you are so sweet! I love you! love you!"

Would the child always love her? She was coming to the crucial years. She was very fond and sincere now, but she had cause to be grateful. She knew so little of the world, she had a winsome charm that was unfolding every day, she would be attractive to others. Jane was her fervent admirer, Bridget adored her, the babies capered around when they saw her in a species of Indian dance.

Yes, she would win love, she would not be dependent on her alone. Would there come a time when she would flit from the wing of fairy godmother and find her only an ordinary friend?

There seemed a sudden dreariness in the world like a bright day clouding over. It

ought not look so to a woman of five and thirty with health and prosperity and plenty of work that did interest her. Other orphan girls might appeal to her to make their lonely lives blossom with hope and happiness.

"Yes, she must let her go with earnest wishes for her future. She would rejoice in whatever came to her and not ask all the fragrance of the sweet young soul. So she kissed Marilla a tender good-night.

There were tears in the child's eyes when she started on her journey. Mr. Lorimer met them at the station with a beautiful box of chocolates, and there was a pile of illustrated papers. She had so little idea of money that even now it was not to be weighed in the balance with fairy godmother.

They passed through pretty towns but autumn had stripped the gardens of their beauty. Even the clumps of evergreens on the lawns looked lonesome. She had never gone through a gloomy tunnel before and was a little frightened. Emerging from it the great city filled her with wonder.

Then they took a hack. Oh, how full of everything the streets were, pedestrians dodg-

ng this way and that, vehicles in a snarl and trolleys whizzing by. It was a miracle people did not get run over.

They reached their destination and Lorimer ushered them in a sort of ante room, taking her to a lady who rose to greet them.

"And so this is cousin Marion's little girl who has been motherless for years! We heard you were dead. If I had known you were living I should have come for you. We were very dear to each other but on her marriage she went away. I can't see that you resemble her much except that she was fair and had light curly hair, and how she did hate it!" laughed Mrs. Warren.

"I like it," rejoined Marilla.

"And she used to soap it and brush it and would never let it really curl; but it was a bed of waves. Oh, child! I'm glad to see you. I was very fond of your mother, and though our fortunes are not very large I suppose we can be thankful for them. It was a great surprise to me. You're hardly old enough to realize all its benefits."

Lorimer went to see when their turn would come. Mrs. Warren and the doctor talked

about Marilla. Then they were summoned to a crowded room where men were signing papers and there was such a hum of talking it was like a swarm of bees.

Marilla held tightly to Mrs. Warren's hand. Dr. Richards was answering questions and a man seemed to verify them from books and and papers. They had a corner to themselves. Then Marilla was questioned about the Home and her being bound-out and she had to declare she was the same little girl, that her mother and father were dead, that she had always lived at Newton.

Then some papers were signed and she was taken in a small room which was filled with tall cases and a great business desk where sat a sharp-eyed man. He wheeled around so suddenly that she started.

"Don't be frightened," he said. "Is Dr. Richards a relative? Do you live with him?"

"No, but he had been so good to her when Miss Armitage had taken her in so she need not go to the hospital. She had been bound-out but the family could not take care of her. Some one had just died."

"Would she like Dr. Richards for her guar-

dian? Had any one told her she must have him?"

"Oh, I want him, I love him," and the flood of eager joy in her sweet face answered him as truly as the words.

He was curiously interested and drew her out a little further, charmed with her simplicity.

Then Doctor Richards had to sign the bond and they were dismissed. Mrs. Warren would take her home, and her guardian would come in the afternoon and take dinner with them and meet Mr. Warren.

There were two trolley rides, then a walk from the corner. The house was in a brick row up on the East side with a little park opposite, and the river only a block away.

The basement windows had tall iron bars that suggested a prison to the child. They ascended the high stoop and the hall door was flung open while a chorus of eager voices cried—

"Oh, is this the new cousin?"

"Yes, Marilla Bond. This is Edith, this is May and this is our baby Jessie—"

"We were afraid you wouldn't get here in time. We had begun our lunch—"

"Run back dears, we will be down in a minute."

They kissed Marilla with sweet heartiness that won her at once. Mrs. Warren took off her wrap and hat and they went down. How strange it was to have these girls smiling and expressing delight.

"You're going to keep her, mother?" declared Edith.

"Oh yes, as long as her guardian will let her stay. You will find her here when you come back."

"And wasn't it funny to have a fortune drop down on you? Mother could hardly believe it at first, and then we were so glad to find you."

Marilla glanced up with a smile, but she wanted to cry for very joy.

Then they kissed her again and ran off to school.

"Were there any children where you lived?"

"Not at Miss Armitage's. That was where I was ill. She took me in, but I had to go back to Mrs. Borden's when I was strong enough.

And then an old lady died and I fainted again and the doctor said it was something with the heart, and they had to take a bigger girl. Then I went to Miss Armitage again. She is so dear and sweet. I want to stay there always."

"You poor child! You see we were in Western New York when your mother died and we didn't hear of it in a long while. We should not have let you go to that Home. Were they good to you?"

"Well, you see some of the children were not very good, and they only gave you so much to eat. Sometimes you felt real hungry. I tried to be good for I didn't like to be punished," she said naively. "You had to scrub floors and learn psalms, when you didn't get whipped. I liked the hymns, only they were not always sweet and pretty, and we went in school at nine and had one little recess. Then after dinner, and school until four, and if you missed you had to stay in. You sewed half an hour then and could play out of doors until six, then you had supper and went to bed."

"What kind of sewing was it?"

"Oh, you hemmed towels and sheets and pillow cases, and mended. The little girls couldn't, so you had to look after their things, and darn their stockings. On Saturday afternoon one of the teachers took you out walking but it was in the woods and the country. All the girls were *so* glad when they were twelve or almost, so they could get away. Mrs. Johnson was very sharp."

"And the lady you went to live with?"

"Oh she was very nice; and her sister. There was a boy of five and twin babies—"

"You didn't have to take care of the babies?"

"Only to play with them and amuse them. They were very fat and Mrs. Borden didn't like me to lift them. Then I used to wheel them in their carriage. I liked that only when it was very cold—or hot. The stores were so pretty, and you met other girls. I used to read the books in the windows; Jack had lots of books. I used to show the pictures to the babies and tell them stories and they would laugh so, just as if they understood it all. They were very good and merry, but it was a long while before they could walk, they were so fat"

"How did she come to let you go?"

"It was one very hot day—and somehow I was so dreadfully tired all the time, I sat down on a stoop—it was a beautiful, shady street with great trees, and most everybody had gone away. The babies were not very well and a little cross. You had to be doing things all the while, and—I don't know what happened, but I fell off the stoop and some one picked me up and then Miss Armitage who lived opposite came over and had me taken to her house and for a long while I just seemed in the dark and didn't know anything. It was then that Dr. Richards came. They were all so good, and it was like being in heaven. The Bordens had gone to Long Island and the babies were very sick getting some teeth, and they wanted me, I was bound, you know, so I had to go as soon as I was well enough. Part of it was very nice; the babies could walk then. After we came back"—she made a little pause for she had not even told Dr. Richards Jack's part in the mishap—"I fainted one day. Their old aunt was ill and she wanted me, so I went and—it was dreadful—she died and I fainted again. Then Miss Armi-

tage came and took me home with her. Mrs. Borden took a new nursemaid, a grown up woman and was willing to let me go, and these other things happened. Oh, I want to stay always with Miss Armitage."

"You poor little girl! I think you have had a rather hard time. What does Dr. Richards say?"

"The other doctor said I had a weak heart. Does that make you faint away? It's almost like dying—you don't seem to know anything for a long while, and it is very hard to get back."

"You have been worked pretty hard I guess." How simply the child had told her story. "But now life will be better. I am very glad this little fortune has come to you, and now I am going up stairs a few moments, and you may look over the books on the table. I will soon be back."

Instead Marilla looked about the room. The front one was the parlor, very nicely furnished. The back one shut off the end of the hall. There were three French windows reaching to the floor, the last one being a door leading out to an enclosed porch with windows

that would be very pleasant in summer. There was only a small yard with a tiny grass plot and an alleyway running through at the back.

There was a big book case in one recess, a lounge, a Morris chair and a substantial center table containing books and papers. It had a home-like, well used look, with several cosy rocking chairs.

Mrs. Warren returned with some sewing and without evincing undue curiosity led Marilla to talk of her past, though the child really knew very little about her mother and seemed to have no tender or regretful regard for this Mrs. Jaques. But her whole heart went out to Miss Armitage in something like worship.

The girls came home and in a short time they were all friends. It seemed odd to them that Marilla had never been to a real school. Jessie was in the kindergarten, but would enter the primary in February. May was there and Edith hoped to get in the High School another year. Then they carried her off to their play room. This was the hall bedroom on the next floor. There was a small book case, a sort of closet with glass doors

where playthings were kept and one shelf devoted to dolls. Marilla stood entranced before it.

"Have you many dolls?" asked May.

"I never had a doll since my mama died," and there were tears in the child's voice.

"But at Christmas—didn't you ever get a doll?"

"I was in a home for orphan girls, Mrs. Johnson didn't think it was right for girls to waste their time on dolls. One Christmas some store sent such a beautiful lot and she returned them all. Some of us cried and we had to learn a lot of bible verses about improving your time. Occasionally a girl would get a clothes pin and tie the middle of her handkerchief around the head and play it was a baby, and lend it out, then they would all get punished. I used to feel so sorry. Dolls are so sweet if they are only make believe. Where I lived the babies had rubber dolls that they could bang on the floor, but they were ugly. This one is splendid."

"That is mine," said Edith. "One of our cousins brought it from Paris. It can walk a little and say 'Mama.' I'm too big to play

with dolls, and I've given the others to May and Jessie."

"And we play tea with them. It is so lovely out on the back porch in the summer and mother lets us take the things down there. And I can make clothes," said May. "But now you can have a doll, because you are going to have some money of your very own."

"Yes," she returned slowly.

There were many pretty things that Marilla wondered at. Edith took out her doll and put it in the visitor's arms. It had such a lovely face that Marilla hugged it up tight and wanted to kiss it. Why it was fifty times sweeter than the twins.

Then they led her to their room. There were two pretty brass beds.

"Edith has the smaller one because she sleeps alone," explained May, "and we little ones love to sleep together."

There were two chiffoniers, and a big closet between the rooms, two pretty willow rockers and some lovely pictures beside various small gifts one could hang up or stand around. How charming it was!

Edith said she must go and study her les-

sons. May brought out her pretty dishes and her card albums. One was partly full of such pretty kittens Marilla wanted to hug them. Another was Christmas, Easter and birthday cards.

Marilla gave a soft little sigh. How many precious things she had missed out of her life! And though she could not have put it into words it was the tender companionship of childhood, of kindred tastes and eager loves. In the desert of Bethany Home all these emotions had been rigorously repressed. It was best for girls not to expect too much in the homes of other people, the little Cinderella whose place was in the chimney corner.

"Marilla," called the voice of Mrs. Warren, in a sort of joyous tone, "Dr. Richards has come."

She almost flew down stairs and he clasped her in his arms.

"I am so happy," she cried in a voice tremulous with emotion. "It seems such a long, long while since morning so much has happened, and Mrs. Warren is to be my Aunt Grace, she said so, and I have three cousins!"

Her face was alight with happiness.

"I wonder if you would get homesick if we did not go back to Newton until some time next week?"

"Oh, no. I shouldn't get homesick at all! But I couldn't stay away from fairy godmother a *long* while. If I didn't have her, Aunt Grace would take me, and the girls are just splendid!"

"I've been to a hospital this afternoon and I want to learn some new things to take home with me, so I will write. You must write, too. I've brought you some envelopes addressed and stamped. Why do you smile?"

"I was thinking of the letter I wrote to you in the summer, and I had to beg everything to write with, and Edith has such a nice portable writing desk, and the girls have portfolios, and they all go to school. Oh, it must be splendid to go to school with a crowd of nice girls and have a lovely teacher."

She had been leading him through the parlor. Mrs. Warren met them and he went on in the sitting room, apologizing for his early appearance.

"Oh, I want you to come in and see your ward whenever you can, and I shall beg for quite a visit from her."

"That will suit me. I feel that I have grown a little rusty and want to look into some new methods. What a wonderful city it is! It quite shames a country doctor."

"I suppose so," smiling. "You should come in often. Mr. Warren will be home presently and glad to meet you. Will you excuse me a few moments? This is my eldest daughter, Edith."

"And can't the others come?" asked Marilla.

"Why, yes, if you like."

Dr. Richards was used to children. He thought he liked girls the best, and this was an attractive circle. How Marilla was enjoying it. Her eyes quivered with flashes of pleasure. Yes, children needed other children to start the real flow of delight through their veins, and his little Cinderella did not suffer by comparison.

Mr. Warren came in and welcomed his guest cordially, looking over the little girl about whom they had speculated. She was very attractive just now, with her face of sunshine and her eyes with their starry look under the long curling lashes.

The men had to discuss the queer unexpected fortune. The Warrens had been notified nearly a year before.

"But I hadn't much faith in it," laughed Mr. Warren. "My wife had really forgotten her family lineage, and we should hardly have claimed the Schermerhorns. There's so much red tape in these matters and by the time the expenses are paid, there's little left for the heirs, but this turns out better than I supposed, considering the many descendants the old man had. I can't complain of the lawyers."

"And we were very glad to find Marion's child, though I wish I had known it when her mother died. Do you want to keep her at Newton?"

"I think Miss Armitage has some claims," he returned.

"And I feel as if we ought to make up for our negligence."

The children were in a little huddle on the corner of the sofa. What was Newton like? A real city?

"Why there are some beautiful long streets and stores and churches and a park and rows of houses built together like this, and schools and trolleys—"

"Why it must be a city then?" said Edith. "Has it a mayor and a city hall and a post-office?"

"It has a mayor and a postoffice and a court house. Mr. Borden used to talk of going there."

"It is a very old town," explained the guardian, "dating farther back than the Revolution, yet it was not much of a business center until the last thirty years; but it is very pretty and rather aristocratic."

"Children," said their mother, "go and make yourselves ready for dinner."

"What lovely curly hair," exclaimed May, half in envy. "I wish mine curled."

"But you have two such beautiful braids." "Jessie's curled a little but it was so thin mother kept cutting it. Dear me! You wouldn't catch me soaping and brushing the curl out of it if mine curled," declared May.

They had a rather merry time at dinner and the children did not seem a bit afraid to talk, though they were not aggressive. But Dr. Richards thought his little ward compared very favorably with the others. Her daintiness suggested Miss Armitage, he fancied.

They sat a long while over their dessert of fruit and nuts, and then the guest said he would have to go as he wanted to attend a lecture by an eminent surgeon. He would be in tomorrow morning.

"I thought I would take Marilla out shopping with me. Come in to dinner again and spend the whole evening."

Dr. Richards promised to.

The others went up to the sitting room. Mr. Warren took possession of the big Morris chair, May had one knee, Jessie the other and Edith seated herself on the broad arm and placed her arm over her father's shoulder. They always exacted an hour of their father and he gave it with the utmost fondness.

"And here is a place for you, little Marilla," he said. "Now the chair is full. I've wondered sometimes if Edith wouldn't tip us over."

"I'd have to be as fat as Auntie Belle to do that," she laughed, "and now papa I want Marilla to tell you about a queer Home she was put in where they wouldn't let the little girls have dolls nor playthings, and they made dollies out of clothes pins and had to hide them."

"That was cruel to little girls. Why they have dolls by right and no one should prevent them. Didn't you play any?"

"Oh yes, out of doors, tag and Uncle John and Scotland's burning, and Lady Jane, and Ring around a Rosy; and then in summer you had to pull weeds in the garden. When it rained you had to march in doors, but if you tried to dance a little you had to go and sit down. Oh, they were very strict."

"And what else did you do?"

"All the bigger girls made the beds and twice a week brushed up the floors, and every little while you went in the kitchen for a week and helped with the cooking so you would know how to work. When you were twelve they bound you out and you had to stay until you were eighteen."

"But didn't you study any?

"Oh, yes, there was school every day."

"And did *you* get bound-out?"

"Yes." She flushed a little.

"But you did not stay?"

"Oh, tell papa about the babies," cried Edith.

"And did you ever notice the Campbell's soup little girl with her round eyes?"

"Who gets fat on eating soup? Yes," and he laughed.

"They looked something like that," said Marilla. "They were so fat and they had such round eyes, and you could make them laugh so easily. I went to take care of them and amuse them, but they were so good, they hardly ever cried, and I used to ride them round—they had such a beautiful wagon! But sometimes it seemed so heavy, it had to be big, you know, and then there was Jack. He wasn't very good, but after awhile he went to kindergarten."

"But how did you get away if you were bound?"

She told the story very simply and how a lovely lady took her in and she was ill a long while, and she knew this was a fairy godmother, so she always called her that, because"—

"Because what?"

"It was a curious dream I had. Bridget said it was a dream; but it seemed so real, and I was Cinderella."

"Oh, do tell us!" they pleaded.

"'I am afraid it's silly," and she flushed.

"Cinderella is lovely, and did you see the Prince?"

They all looked so eager that she was persuaded. So she began by sitting in the corner of the kitchen and they listened as if they were enchanted. She was so vivid it seemed as if her face was transfigured. Mrs. Warren dropped her sewing and bent forward.

Edith drew a long breath and squeezed the new cousin's hand. "Oh" she cried, "it's lovelier than the real Cinderella, and you danced with the Prince? Can you dance—truly?"

"Oh, yes, after that, I used to dance for Bridget. Mrs. Johnson wouldn't let you, she thought it wicked. It's queer how people think about things, and I danced for the babies. Mrs. Borden and her sister went to dancing parties; they didn t think it wrong. It's so beautiful."

"Our cousins Isabel and Charlie Firth go to dancing school. Mother thinks I may go next winter. They are teaching it in some schools."

"Children," said Mrs. Warren, "do you

know what time it is? You must go to bed. Marilla you have betwitched us all. And papa will have hardly time to read his paper. Come. Marilla will not run away, so you can have her tomorrow night."

Mr. Warren kissed all the little girls and they trooped off.

"You may sleep on the lounge in my room, Edith, and give Marilla your bed, I can't send her up stairs alone, and now you must not say a word after your prayers for I know she is clear tired out."

They were generally very good children to mind. Their mother left them with a good-night kiss. Mr. Warren had rolled his chair nearer the center table and taken up his paper.

"Mother," he exclaimed, "that Marilla is an unusual child. How beautifully she describes everything, but the sweetest trait about her in her utter lack of bitterness. Most children would have been sharp and disparaging about Mrs. Johnson, but she never uttered a bitter word. It really was wonderful. I hope that Dr. Richards will give her a first-class education, and I'd like to see that fairy

godmother. Marilla needs good care, she isn't very strong, but there is happiness in every pulse of her small body. I wish we could keep her."

The next morning the children had to kiss her half a dozen times before they went to school, and make her promise over and over again that she would not let Dr. Richards take her home. While Mrs. Warren was doing up her morning's work Marilla wrote her letter to Miss Armitage, who smiled over the thrill of delight that ran through it. Aunt Grace was so sweet and lovely and she couldn't describe the girls for she didn't know any words that were beautiful enough and good enough to apply to them. Jessie was a real little beauty with the most wonderful eyes that were like brown velvet and sunshine, and she didn't know father's could be so sweet as Uncle Warren. Maybe Mr. Borden would love the twins that way when they grew older. They might be prettier then. But her dear fairy godmother lived in her mind all the time, she wanted her to see and hear everything. There would be so much to tell her that she couldn't write.

It was a wonderful day to Marilla. Such splendid stores and gowns that were fit for queens. Such beautiful dishes and jewelry, such stacks of books; and, oh, such dolls holding out their hands with a pleading look in their eyes. She could hardly tear herself away. Was she too big to have a doll?

Then they went into a cozy place and had a dainty lunch, only it did seem as if Marilla was too happy to eat. If fairy godmother were only here!

Afterward they went to the Eden Musee. You had to ride from place to place; why, it was full of strange people who never stirred. They could not be dead! What *was* the matter with them? The wonder in her eyes made Mrs. Warren smile. Some were funny, too; you wanted to laugh with them. Marilla sat down in perfect despair as if she had gone to some strange country.

"I don't see how they can make them just like folks," she said. "You feel almost sure they are going to speak to you."

A very tired little girl it was who came home, but it was such a pleasant, happy tired she didn't mind. It wasn't like dragging the

heavy babies around. Aunt Grace made her lie down on the lounge and the girls gathered round her talking it over. They had been several times.

Then Dr. Richards came in and they had such a delightful time. Why the whole world of pleasure was fairy land when you come to think of it. "And there's the Hippodrome," said Edith. "Oh mother don't you believe father could take us on Saturday?"

"And couldn't I go, too?"

The doctor asked in such a whimsical tone that they all laughed. Jessie sidled up to him, she was well so she need not be afraid of a doctor. She was very sweet but she wasn't quite Cinderella.

What a fine evening they had! It seemed as if they must have known each other for years. Bits of Marilla's life came out unconsciously; the doing for others without thinking of herself that really did glorify it. Unwittingly she showed more of it to Dr. Richards than she had ever before in her gratitude. Under the children's questions some of the trials came out.

Every morning she wrote to Miss Armitage

out of her full heart, and the lady understood how she would thrive in natural companionship. Almost she felt as if she ought to yield her to these relatives, but she wanted her. It was strange how she had left her impress everywhere yet she was a very modest little girl, demanding nothing, taking all favors with a gratitude that was fascinating. Jane rehearsed so many pretty sayings and missed her everywhere. Bridget came around to hear whether the story of the fortune was absolutely true. The Bordens could harldy believe it. Mr. John Borden wished they had not let her go quite so soon. "She certainly was a nice child," he said.

They went to the great stores and to Central Park, and Marilla overflowed with happiness. Why it was like the fairy dream, and she wished the girls at the Home could have some of it, or could find a fairy godmother. There were so many things to interest the doctor. How the days did slip away and all the time Marilla grew sweeter, dearer; but at last he said they *must* go home.

"Oh, how can we let you go?" cried Edith. "Why I do believe you came from fairy land

yourself; but now you'll come and visit us often."

"And you can come to Newton. Fairy godmother has such a lovely house, and she is so sweet. You will like her."

Oh, the child ought not be on sufferance but have the genial freedom of a home of her very own where she could live over the childhood she had missed and learn the glad inspiration of youth.

What did Miss Armitage mean to do for her? Yes, she wanted her; why there would be a great loss in life without her, but she no longer needed charity. She could not do everything for her; as she had planned. Would she share a divided interest?

Dr. Richards heart yearned over her, coveted her. Marilla had crept in and taken possession of his inmost soul. It was not likely there would be any other occupant. For he had never seen any sign of relenting on Miss Armitage's part. They were excellent friends. Neither overstepped the prescribed bounds, and he must have something to love and to cherish.

But he had to tear himself away presently,

and he carried her with him in his heart, and the next morning he dropped in and had her all to himself. Mrs. Warren had gone to the dressmakers.

"Oh," Marilla said with a long sigh of delight, "how lovely it is to have sisters! and—and a father! If I couldn't have but one I think I'd take the father. Isn't Mr. Warren just splendid and sweet and charming? There's a book of poems at Miss Armitage's that has one such beautiful thing—'The Children's Hour.' And they have it here. The hour after dinner if there are no visitors belongs to the children. The smaller ones take possession of his lap and Edith sits on the arm of the chair. I sat on the other," and she laughed with such a happy sound. "And they tell him everything, what they have read and studied, and the little troubles and differences and perplexities, and he listens and explains and laughs with them when it is funny, and everything is so nice. I didn't suppose fathers could be so dear and sweet, but I never knew any real father except Mr. Borden, and Jack *was* a torment. He wanted to pound and bang and wrinkle up things and ask silly

questions. Maybe the twins will be different, and perhaps he will love girls the best."

"And you would like to have a father?" There was a subtle sweetness in his tone.

She drew a long breath, he felt the heart quiver irregularly, the little heart that would need careful watching the next few years, that so far had been worked pretty hard.

"Oh, so much!" There was an exquisite longing and a sound as of a prayer, "but you know I'd want some one I could love."

She was ready to give, not take all.

"Marilla, would I do?"

She raised her head and looked at him out of longing, pleading eyes that turned joyous like a sudden glowing sunrise.

"Oh!" she cried, "Oh!"

But the wonderful satisfying intonation would have moved any heart.

"And I want a little girl," he continued. "I shall never have one of my very own;"— it is the way a man thinks when he knows he cannot have the woman he would choose for the mother of his children.

She was silent. He saw the shining tears beading the curly lashes. She was sorry for him.

"And if you could be *my* little girl—"

"Oh, if I might!" and the longing freighted her tone. "If I could be good enough—if I could love you enough, Oh, I *would* try. I should be so happy. To have a father of one's own!"

"Children are sometimes adopted."

"Yes, they were at Bethany Home, but they had to be very pretty, I'm not—very."

"But I love you because you are *you*, I don't want you changed any way. I want a daughter to be a companion as I grow older, to read to me, to confide in me, to come to me in any trouble, to make a real home, for a man alone cannot do that, and to love me very, very dearly."

"I have always loved you," she said simply. Then after a moment—"would I live with you?"

"Yes, when I have found a pretty home, and you will make friends and have them visit you, and we will take journeys and have pleasures like the Warrens."

"Oh! How good you are!" in a tone of tremulous joy. There was a little twinge of conscience in both hearts concerning Miss

Armitage. He salved his, thinking if she had wanted to she might have made some proffer of adoption. Marilla hardly knew how to choose between them. If they could both go and live in Loraine place!

"I'll see Lorimer this afternoon. You have to apply to the legislature, and you will have your name changed to Richards. Maybe the judge or some will one question you whether you are willing to take me for a father, since you are old enough to choose, and there are several formalities, but the thing is often done, and you will be mine, mine," pressing her to his heart in rapture.

"I am so glad." Every pulse throbbed with joy.

He yielded to the subtle satisfaction and kissed the sweet mouth. Oh, he must get her strong and well and give her a lovely, long life! Like a vision he could see her growing sweeter and dearer every year, making life blossom with her love.

Then Mrs. Warren returned and the girls came home to lunch, having a merry time talking over the Hippodrome.

"Nearly every Saturday papa takes us

somewhere," said May. "There are some beautiful plays for children and concerts and all summer the park is splendid, though you can always go inside and there is so much to see; and an automobile ride! Oh, I wish you were going to live here!"

There were so many pleasures to give his little girl. It made his heart beat with joy to think he was going to have one. Life had seemed a bit lonely as he glanced down the years. It would never be lonely now. He would take such pleasure in making her happy.

"Yes," he went on. . I'll get a pretty home and we will always be together."

CHAPTER XIV

THE REAL FAIRYLAND

That evening the two cousins on the Warren side came in, Isabel and Willis Firth. Isabel was just the age of Edith and Willis, older. The children gave up their hour cheerfully. There was so much to talk about, and the school was going to have an entertainment—"The Dance of All Nations."

"I suppose not quite *all*," said Isabel, "though the boys are to give an Indian dance in costume, and the Dutch dance is in clogs, and oh, you can't imagine how funny and clumpy it sounds, but it is real pretty with the aprons and the caps, but the Spanish is beautiful with castanets. You must all come. Is your friend staying long?"

"I think"—rather hesitatingly, "we will go home next week."

"Oh, that will be too bad, and the dance is to be two weeks from tomorrow, in the afternoon, in a hall. It will be splendid!"

"I suppose this is the little cousin who came

after the fortune," said Willis, isn't it nice to have a fortune left to you?"

"I hardly know"—hesitatingly.

"Oh my! I'd know quick enough," laughed the boy. "Isabel wouldn't it be fine enough to have ten or twelve thousand left to us? I'd be sure of going to college."

"The University ought to be good enough for city boys," said Uncle Warren.

They played authors for a while "because they could talk" Willis said. Then Aunt Warren played for them to dance. At first Marilla hesitated.

"Oh, it's only three-step" exclaimed Edith. "I'll show you, and if you danced at the King's ball"—

She found she could dance easy enough. It was quite delightful. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks like roses.

Then they tried several other pretty dances, and spiced them with much laughter. Oh, how gay they were.

"Who was it said something about the King's ball?" asked Willis. "Was it a make believe?"

"Oh it is the prettiest thing!" replied Edith.

"You see, Cousin Marilla sat alone in the kitchen one night when the maid had gone out and a fairy godmother came and asked her if she didn't want to go to the ball. Finding her in the kitchen you see she took her for Cinderella, and she touched her with her wand—now Marilla, go on, I couldn't tell it half as delightfully as you do; you make it so real."

Marilla's face had been scarlet at first, for she was almost ashamed of being a little bound-out girl before these newcomers, but Edith had started it so beautifully that she smiled at her audience.

"Let's sit on the floor," said Willis. "That's the way they do in Persia, and Aunt Grace never finds fault with us."

They gathered around the little girl. Even Uncle Warren laid down his paper and joined the circle. And what an attentive audience!

"Well that's just fine!" ejaculated Willis. "I've never seen just such a Cinderella, and there wasn't any glass slipper?"

"Don't interrupt," said his sister.

It was all so vivid and Marilla made such pretty gestures with her hands and swayed

her head to and fro, that they could fairly see the palace, and the banquet was superb with its lights and flowers and beautiful adornments.

"And couldn't they dance but just one evening with the Prince? That was rather tough."

"But there was so many knights and the Cinderellas seemed just as happy. No one was cross."

"Well, that was wonderful! Oh, didn't you hate to wake up?"

"I don't believe I did really wake up, and every night for awhile I seemed dreaming it over, and I can shut my eyes and see it so plainly. When things didn't go quite right it was such a pleasure."

"Oh, you're a darling!" cried Isabel. "I just wish the kindergarten children could hear it told that way. If you were a grown-up girl they'd pay you for telling stories."

"Aunt Grace can't you bring her around and let mother hear that?" asked Willis. "My mother is so fat she hates to go out anywhere," to Marilla. "She thinks it disgraceful! But she's a sweet mother for all that; and now we

must go home. Thank you a hundred times for the story. When I have my party I shall send for you and dance with you every other time. You ought to be named Cinderella."

She looked so bright and happy and promised to visit them if Dr. Richards did not take her home too soon.

But the Hippodrome was beyond any dream. Sometimes she held her breath with delight until she was fairly tired. Dr. Richards watched the sweet, changeful face. Yes, she should be all his—why he had never dreamed of anything half as sweet as the joy of a father.

Sunday afternoon he and Mr. Lorimer came in. The girls had gone to Sunday School. He laid his plan before the Warrens who were a good deal surprised.

"As a man grows older he begins to think of a home and the joys nothing else offers, and a doctor really needs the comfort, the satisfaction nothing else can give. I've never had a home though I've dreamed of one, but there must be another person in it. I'm not of the hermit sort. I want some one to be merry with me and to comfort me when the skies are dark and lowering."

"Oh, Dr. Richards, you should marry, exclaimed Mrs. Warren, impetuously.

"I've been so engrossed—and this sort of vision has come to my very door as it were, and I have let it in. For a few years Marilla will need watchful care from some one who can understand the weak points. I should get a nice, motherly woman who would be sweet and tender to her, companionable as well. For you see she must go to some one for a home."

"And we would gladly take her in here," said Mrs. Warren. "She has really won our hearts."

We would do Miss Armitage full justice, at least he thought it so then. He related her kindness, her generosity, but she had been tender and sympathetic to many another child he remembered, yet he could not quite still the one cry he had heard from her.

"Thank you most sincerely," he returned. "I am glad she has found some relatives who have taken her in in this cordial manner. I want her to remain warm friends with you all. Of course until I was settled to my liking her home would be with Miss Armitage and she

could come whenever you would like to have her. A young girl needs friends of her own kind, whose interests and hopes are similar."

They discussed the matter from more than one point of view. At first Lorimer had tried to banter him out of the plan, insisting that the guardianship would be sufficient. There was something in his earnest desire that touched the heart of the man of wide experience. He wondered why he could not be as persistent to win the lady! Perhaps she would follow the child.

She came in radiant and full of joy. It was such a splendid Sunday School. She could enjoy it thoroughly with no bothering Jack to think about.

Lorimer made his adieu but the doctor remained. They sang in the evening. She caught any tune so readily, and a little bird of joy kept time in her heart. She had only to glance up in the doctor's eyes to know there was a kindred delight in his.

She spent most of the next morning writing to fairy godmother. There was so much to say, for everything was so new, so different from her life hitherto. Oh, she was so glad

she did not have to go back to that! No one had been really unkind or severe with her and she could recall some tenderness at the last on Aunt Hetty's part, but the death always made her shudder.

These days of affliction had been so sweet, so engrossing. She had not dared to love Miss Armitage in this fashion in the beginning. She loved her deeply, truly, now, and her heart smote her in spite of the thrill of joy when she thought of Dr. Richard's love, of belonging to him. Would she leave her for the new love? She had not the courage to mention it, but there were so many other things to say.

Every day brought something new. They went to the wonderful museum. She could not take in half, but Dr. Richards said no one could. You came time and again, all your life, and always found something new. And there were the Histo ical Society rooms with their marvellous collection of birds that enchanted her.

They spent a delightful evening at the Firths, though she decided she liked Uncle Warren the better. The Firth house was very handsomely appointed, but it did not have so

much the air of home where you could sit on the arm of the chair and say all manner of childish things.

Mrs. Firth was very stout, but she had a really pretty face and a voice that won you with a certain caressing mellowness. Both cheeks had a deep dimple and a crease went from one to the other that seemed to define the first chin. She sat in a high backed chair and Marilla thought she looked like a princess, and her gown made the child think of the beautiful dresses in the fairy place.

But on Friday Dr. Richards said they *must* go back to Newton. They would come again however, there was still a little business to settle. It was a sad parting, and when Marilla took her seat in the train she turned her face to the window and surreptitiously wiped away the tears, though she longed to see fairy godmother.

The hack whirled them to Loraine place. The great trees stood like sentinels stretching out their bare limbs. The beautiful autumn had gone, you noted it more here. Up the stoop—how her heart beat, and yet somehow she seemed as if she had lived another lifetime.

"Oh dear, dear Marilla," cried Jane with the warmest embrace. "We have missed you so much and are so glad to get you back. Why it hasn't seemed the same house, and everybody has wanted you. Dr. Richards, that Mrs. McCormick died this morning and Miss Armitage was there until noon. Five little children left, think of it, she came home and went straight to bed, but she's had a cup of tea and will be down in a few minutes.

They entered the parlor. Marilla took off her hat and coat, it was so warm indoors. She had on a new frock, a curious blue that was very becoming. Her cheeks were a lovely pink, her eyes full of expectancy.

Miss Armitage came down the back stairway and through the library. Marilla gave one cry and was in her arms.

No one had won her away, then. During these days she had had many thoughts about the child's future. She had felt jealous of the new found relatives and their love, of Dr. Richards' devotion, of the happy times when she had been counted out. Work had failed to inspire, evenings had been lonely, dreary. Oh, she would never let her go away again

Oh, fairy godmother! I wanted you so.

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unless she went with her. She would beseech the law to make the child hers—

"Oh, fairy godmother!" The charming, joyous tone that showed the child's certainty of a warm welcome. "It has all been so lovely, but I wanted you so. I wanted you to see the girls and their father who is the loveliest, no not *quite* the loveliest," and her eyes shone with a tender radiance, the flush made her beautiful. "For, fairy godmother, I have a father now who will love me and care for me, and I am filled to the brim with happiness—it is better than the fortune. I could hardly wait to tell you. Oh, please be glad for my sake."

"A father?" she repeated, in a breathless tremulous sort of way.

"Yes," said Dr. Richards, and there was a strange sort of assurance in his tone. He seemed to have changed mysteriously—there is a vigor, a power and withal a sweet satisfaction in his face that gives her a pang she does not understand.

"Yes," he repeated. "The fortune is all right. I have been made her guardian, but that did not satisfy me. I have taken out

papers of adoption, she is my child, my little little daughter and she has a new, legal, lawful name—Marilla Cinderella Richards."

"Oh, oh!" The pathetic cry unnerved him.

"Dear fairy godmother it can't make any difference in my love for you. I loved you first, you know. I shall always love you, but I want us to live together and be as happy as they are at the Warrens, and I love him, my new father, so much. When you have something of your very own it fills you everywhere like beautiful music. I've been learning how sweet and dear it can be. Oh, fairy godmother, I want you both. It would break my heart to lose either of you. Oh, fairy godmother, can't you love him; can't you, won't you marry him and let us all live together?"

There was a penetrating sweetness in the pleading, but she saw the red of surprise mount to the very edge of the man's hair, and almost a frown settle between the eyes. Her face dropped to the silken soft head and she felt the child's heart beat tumultuously. To make the two who loved her happy—to have them for her own——

She reached out her hand—it was her right

hand. He caught it and pressed it to his lips with a fervor that thrilled every pulse of her being.

It was not the tie of kindred blood, but that divine immortal kindred of love, and as he clasped his arms about them both they were Father, Mother and Child.

And so, Marilla had not only the Fairy Godmother, but the Prince as well.

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